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RANJIT SINGH

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FOREWORD

THIS little book describes the steps by which the rule of Ranjit Singh was established in the Punjab and the means by which his authority was maintained and the administration carried on. It has been written from the standpoint not of biography but of history. In an absolutist Government, however, it is impossible to eliminate the personal factor. But no attempt has been made to idolize the hero or to slur over facts. While brevity has always been kept in view, it is hoped nothing of historical importance has been omitted or left obscure.

Many books exist on the subject. The author's aim has been to supply the defects of each and to furnish as comprehensive an account as existing literature and latest researches would warrant. In saying this the author does not minimise the value of the books consulted in the preparation of this short manual. The books to which acknowledgments are due for help received are herewith mentioned :—

C. Von Huegel's *Travels in Kashmir and the Punjab* (1844). Victor Jacquemont's *Letters from India* (1835). Shahamat Ali's *The Sikhs and Afghans* (1847). H. Steinbach's *The Punjab* (1845). H. T. Prinsep's *Ranjit Singh* (1834). W. G. Osborne's *The Court and Camp of Ranjit Singh* (1840). J. D. Cunningham's *A History of the Sikhs*, Principal Garret's edition (1918). Major Carmichael Smyth's *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore* (1847). W. L. Macgregor's *History of the Sikhs* (1847). S. M. Latif's *History of the Punjab* (1891). C. Gough and A. D. Innes's *The Sikhs and the Sikh Wars* (1897). J. J. H. Gordon's *The Sikhs* (1904). Dr. G. L. Chopra's *The Punjab as a Sovereign State* (1928). Dr. G. C. Narang's *Transformation of Sikhism* (1812). C. H. Payne's *A short History of the Sikhs* (1915). L. Griffin's *Ranjit Singh* (1892).

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RANJIT SINGH

CHAPTER I

RISE OF RANJIT SINGH

The Punjab in the eighteenth century. The centrifugal forces inherent in the Mughal system of Government, the short-sighted policy of Aurangzeb, the downright imbecility of his successors, the disturbing invasion of Nadir Shah and the ominous appearance of the Mahrattas in Northern India contributed to the destruction of the Mughal Empire. By the middle of the 18th century the Imperial prestige had departed and independent States had been carved out all over the country. Whatever little prestige the Padshah of Delhi might still have possessed was shattered by the eight invasions (1747-67) of Ahmad Shah Abdali.

Anarchy in the Punjab and Rise of the misls.

The Punjab in the second half of the 18th century neither formed an independent State nor was it dependent on Delhi or Kabul. The disunity and disorganisation which reigned all over India was the special feature of the Punjab. And this was chiefly due to its geographical situation and the character of its inhabitants. Lying across the regular track of the invaders from the north-west, it was always exposed to the risk of being detached from the Mughal rule, particularly when the Delhi Padshah was weak and when Afghanistan was under a strong monarch; and the latter in the 18th century, did not make any systematic attempt either at its complete subjugation or proper administration.

Ahmad Shah intermittently appointed governors to rule the province or parts of it, but his hold on the Punjab was always uncertain. Persecuted and oppressed the Sikhs comported themselves as peaceful subjects in their villages or lurked in valleys and woods to obtain a precarious livelihood as robbers. They bided their time and the absence of any regular government in the province gave them the desired opportunity. They became not only masters of their villages but began to erect forts for the purpose of keeping stranger communities in check. They grouped themselves into bands and found for themselves leaders who were to lead them in war or arbitrate in peace. The war-lords were usually, though not always, hereditary, subject of course to their competence to maintain their positions in the eyes of their followers. Dating from the middle of the 18th century these local bands or confederacies, called *Misls*, increased in number and strength, till they grew as many as twelve and could in all bring into the field, at the lowest calculation, some 60,000 cavalry and 5,000 infantry and only 40 pieces of field artillery.*

The twelve misls.

At a time of chaos and anarchy the people of a locality placed themselves under a leader for whom they fought and by whom they were protected. Originating in this motive of personal protection the *misls* in process of time increased in power and established themselves as territorial lords in several areas by taking advantage of the confusion caused by the repeated, futile and plundering incursions of Ahmad Shah Abdali. Following Lepel Griffin we may mention the 12 *misls* according to what he considers the

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*This is the estimate of George Thomas (c. 1800). Thomas's activities in the Eastern Punjab may be dated between 1787 and 1802, the year of his death. [Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs pp. 122—24.*] Brown's estimates (1781) are 73,000 horse and 25,000 foot, and Forster's (1713) 300,000 total. H. T. Prinsep places the number of horse at 69,500. [*Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab*, Calcutta, 1834, pp. 29—32.]

order of their importance at the time of the birth of Ranjit Singh (1780 A.D.): (1) Phulkian, (2) Ahluwalia, (3) Bhangi, (4) Kanheya, (6) Ramgarhia, (6) Faizalpuria or Singhpuria, (7) Karorasinghia, (8) Nishania, (9) Shukarchakia, (10) Dallewalia. (11) Nakai, and (12) Shahid or Nihangi. The Phulkians were native to the country between Sunam and Bhatinda ; and this *misl* was composed of a group of chiefs descended from a common ancestor and now represented by the Maharajas of Patiala, Nabha and Jind, and the Sirdars of Bhadour, Malod and others. The Ahluwalias occupied mainly the left bank of the Beas. The native possessions of the Bhangis extended north from their cities of Lahore and Amritsar to the Jhelum and then down that river. The Kanheyas possessed a large part of the Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts. Some portions of the same districts as well as of the Jalandhar Doab belonged to the Ramgarhias. The Singhpurias possessed tracts along the right bank of the Beas and of the Sutlej below the confluence. The family of Kalsia was the principal member of the Karorasinghia *misl*. The Nishanias held lands between Ambala and Saharanpur. Gujranwala was the centre of the Shukarchakia *misl* ; its possession lay around Sialkot, Gujrat and across the Jhelum in Pind Dadan Khan and Miani. The Dallewalias possessed themselves of the right bank of the Upper Sutlej. The Nakais inhabited the Nakai country lying between Lahore and Gogaira in the direction of Multan. The Shahid *misl* obtained estates about Rania, Khari and Jaroli, and its representatives held charge of the sacred shrine of Damdama Sahib.

The original or acquired possessions of the misls.

Space would not permit a detailed account of each of these *misls*. But general remarks about them may be made. First, they did not all exist in their full strength at the same time and sometimes one *misl* gave birth to another. Secondly, their names were derived from the village (*e.g.*, Shukarchak is a village in the

General remarks on the misls.

Amritsar District), the district or the progenitor of the first or most eminent chief or from some peculiarity of custom or of leadership. Thirdly, of the trans-Sutlej confederacies the prominent were the Bhangis, the Kanheyas, and the Ahluwalias. Though historians differ as to the order of pre-eminence among these, yet opinion is unanimous in regard to the initial insignificance of the Shukarchakia *misl* to which Ranjit Singh belonged: it commanded, according to Prinsep, only 2,500 horse, that is to say, about one-tenth of the number at the disposal of the Bhangis. Lastly, the confederacy of the *misls* forming the Khalsa Commonwealth may be said to have passed through two stages. In the earlier stage the *Sarbat Khalsa* evinced unity of feeling and action inasmuch as they had to withstand and eradicate the common danger to their religion and existence from the Musalman rulers and invaders. "God was their helper and only judge, community of faith or object was their moving principle, and warlike array, the devotion to the steel of Guru Govind Singh was their instrument." No doubt every *misl* acted independently or in concert as necessity or inclination suggested. But every year the *Sarbat Khalsa* or at least the *misaldars* used to meet at Amritsar in Dasehra week (or on special occasions for particular purposes) at the summons of the Akalis of the Darbar Sahib. In this *Gurumatta*, as the Sikh Diet was called, they would partake of the *Karah Prasad* in token of general and complete union in one cause, swear by their Holy Scriptures to forget all mutual animosities and to remain united against the enemies of the Khalsa. If the joint forces of the several misls took the field upon any predatory enterprise or to collect *rakha* (blackmail) the army assumed the denomination of *Dal Khalsa* [Prinsep, p. 32]. This political system has been called theocratic confederate feudalism. In spite of the defects which such a system implied, it induced a feeling of corporate life which was preserved without the sacrifice of the much-valued freedom and independence. The second of

The Gurumatta.

the two stages began with the weakening of the danger from Delhi or Kabul or the local Musalman rulers. With the disappearance of the peril and the growth of a sense of their strength disappeared the spirit of co-operation among the Khalsa chiefs. One sign was that between 1764 and 1805 no *Gurumatta* was convened. The theocratic idea and the federative principle were lost sight of in the selfish and ruthless scramble for secular dominion; and in consequence, the Punjab was parcelled out among a number of warring feudal chiefs. To mention some specific instances, the Kanheyas were at feud with the Ramgarhias and the latter with the Ahluwalias. Bitter hostility existed between the Shukarchakias and the Bhangis and between the latter and the Kanheyas. But hostility was as easily incurred as friendship formed; and there was a frequent shuffling and reshuffling of parties.

Other Chiefs in the Punjab.

Besides the Sikh *misaldars* there were some Hindu Rajas of whom the most important was Sansar Chand of the Kangra Hills. The important Muhammadan rulers were Nawab Muzaffar Khan Sadozai of Multan, Jahandad Khan of Attock and Bahawal Khan of Bahawalpur and Dera Ghazi Khan. Of no less account were the Musalman chiefs of Kasur, Jhang, Dera Ismail Khan, Mankera, Bannu and Kohat. The Peshawar Valley was administered by Fateh Khan Barukzai as the nominal vassal of the Durrani ruler of Kabul and the province of Kashmir by his brother, Azim Khan. Punjab was then a congeries of independent chieftainships with their heads ever watching for opportunities to fly at one another's throat. Law there was none except that of the sword; and the maxim of Rob Roy prevailed.

Such was the political condition of the Punjab during the last quarter of the 18th century. It was impossible that such a state of things as described above could last long. It was

impossible that there could be peace in a province so long as the hordes of warriors were not controlled and guided by a central government under the authority of a commanding genius. Forster, the acute traveller, remarked in 1783 that an able chief led on by his genius and success, would probably absorb the territories of his associates and erect an absolute power on the ruins of the rude commonwealth. This is the history we have to narrate; how Ranjit Singh succeeding in 1792 at the age of twelve to the headship of the minor *misl* of Shukarchakia, maintained his own against his powerful neighbours and then mastered them by alliance or conquest establishing an unchallenged dominion over the area from the Sutlej on the east to the hills on the north-west.

Evolution of a military despotism.

Career of Ranjit Singh up to the occupation of Lahore. It was Charat Singh who raised the Shukarchakia *misl* to some degree of prominence. While engaged on on expedition against Ranjit Deo of Jammu he was killed, perhaps in 1771, by the bursting of his own matchlock. His son, Maha Singh, succeeded to the headship of the confederacy at the age of eleven or twelve. Maha Singh increased the influence and possessions of the *misl*. In 1774 he married Raj Kaur, daughter of Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the issue of this marriage; he was born on November 2, 1780. In 1784 Maha Singh helped by Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Sansar Chand, the Katotch Raja, defeated the Kanheyas under Jai Singh near Batala. The defeat was the prelude to an alliance with the Shukarchakia: for Mehtab Kaur (daughter of Jai Singh's dead son, Gurbaksh Singh) was married* to Ranjit Singh (1795). Mehtab Kaur

Charat Singh and Maha Singh.

* Probably the betrothal was celebrated in 1785 and the marriage in 1795. The date of the second marriage is also variously given. [Chopra p. 10. Prinsep, p. 46: and Cunningham, p. 176.] Much has been said about Sada Kaur's character [Lepel Griffin, 160, Cunningham, 160, 175.] Space has not been found, in this little book for accounts which are both immaterial and discrepant.

inherited all the Kanheya lands and treasures which were administered by her mother Sada Kaur, a woman of extraordinary ability. At the time of his father's death Ranjit Singh was only twelve years of age. But a Sikh in those days learnt the art of war very early; and Ranjit Singh was immeasurably above an average Sikh. Brought in the midst of difficulties and dangers Ranjit Singh grew to be daring, warlike and prudent beyond his years. For the same reason he grew up to manhood without learning to read or write. In 1797 he contracted a second marriage with Raj Kaur, daughter of Khazan Singh, the Nakai chief. By two politic marriages he secured a position inferior to none among the Sikh *misaldars*.

Ranjit Singh's succession and marriages.

About the same time as the second marriage, Ranjit Singh assumed personal control of affairs. Ever since Maha Singh's death the work of administration had been conducted by Ranjit Singh's mother and Dewan Lakhpat Rai. The Dewan was sent on a dangerous expedition to Kaithal where he was killed. The regent mother (known as Mai Malwain), who was suspected of illicit connexion with the Diwan, was probably shut up in a fortress where she died. After this his two chief counsellors were Dal Singh (Maha Singh's maternal uncle) and Sada Kaur.

Personal assumption of power.

During 1795-98 the Punjab was thrice exposed to invasion by Zaman Shah who reigned in Kabul from 1793 to 1801. During these incursions the Sikh chiefs across the path of the invader reteated to the hills and jungles, returning when the enemy withdrew to Kabul. In 1798 the Shah invaded for the last time and occupied Lahore without opposition. Ranjit Singh was one of those who retired before the invader; but he usefully employed himself in leading an expedition across the Sutlej. The invader was compelled to evacuate Lahore in the beginning of 1799 as his own kingdom was threatened from the west

by the Shah of Persia. Crossing the Jhelum in flood the Afghan monarch lost some of his guns. Ranjit Singh who had become a well-known man by that time, was asked to extricate the guns. Eight out of the twelve guns were raised and forwarded to Kabul. In return for the service the Shukarchakia chief was granted Lahore and the title of Raja. It was a barren grant: for the grantee had to enforce his claim by force of arms. However, he was invested by the grandson of Ahmad Shah Abdali with an authority which counted for much among the Muhammadan population of Lahore.

Shah Zaman and Ranjit Singh.

Lahore at the time was in the possession of the Bhangis. Their rule was extortionate, and the consequent discontent was taken advantage of by opening intrigues with Muhammad Ashiq and other chowdhuries who promised on the approach of Ranjit Singh to open the gates of the city. Nor did the chief rely on artifice only. He made the necessary preparations against a siege. At the head of Kanheya and Nakai troops, in addition to his own, he marched to Lahore. The traitors did their part of the promise, and Ranjit Singh occupied Lahore almost without a blow (July, 1799). But the success which had hitherto attended his arms and the occupation of the capital of the Punjab with the title of Raja raised up a powerful coalition of the Bhangis and Ramgarhias, the leaders of which were Gulab Singh and Jassa Singh. The two armies lay encamped for two months at Bhasin, some 10 *kos* from Lahore. But mainly on account of the death of Gulab Singh the confederate Sardars broke up their camp (1800). Thenceforward Ranjit Singh remained in undisturbed possession of Lahore. The possession of the capital, the outward mark of provincial hegemony, invested the possessor with a prestige which was also duly upheld by his military strength. Not only was Lahore fortified

Occupation of Lahore.

and provision made for its proper administration, but commensurate with its ownership Ranjit Singh formally assumed the title of Maharaja (1801), and ordered that in public correspondence he should be styled *Sarkar* and minted coins* in token of his sovereignty. The Khalsa thus entered the first stage of nationhood and of territorial sovereignty over the Punjab under a capable national ruler.

* These rupees 177 grains in weight, bore the inscription : "*Deg* (abundance on earth and grace of God), *Tegh* (power)and *Fath* (rapid victory) Guru Gobind Singh received from Nanak." These coins of Ranjit Singh closely imitated those struck by the Sikhs on capturing Lahore in 1764. The absence of the sovereign's name is significant : Ranjit Singh was the instrument of the Khalsa to deliver the country of the foreigners. The language used, however, was Persian. [Cunningham's *History of Sikhs*, p. 104. *footnote* ; Dr. G. L. Chopra's *The Punjab as a Sovereign State, pp 241-242.*]

CHAPTER II

THE DOMINION OF RANJIT SINGH

A Decade of Conquests. With the conquest of Lahore began a decade during which Ranjit Singh was engaged in raids and wars with a view to establish his power and to carve out a kingdom. Just as Lahore was the political capital, so Amritsar was the religious capital of the Sikhs. Amritsar, in addition, was another centre of the Bhangi power. A pretext was found in the refusal to surrender to Ranjit Singh the gun, *zamzama*, which had been assigned to his grandfather Charat Singh, as part of the plunder when Lahore had been captured from the Muhammadans in 1764. After exchanging turbans at Tarn Taran with Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and thereby securing his alliance, Ranjit Singh proceeded to besiege Amritsar which was taken (1802). Gujrat was another Bhangi stronghold in possession of Sahib Singh; it was taken in 1809 by Aziz-ud-din; and his brother Nur-ud-Din was made its governor. Thus the Bhangi confederacy was crushed and its possessions absorbed.

Destruction of Bhangi power.

Nizam-ud-Din of Kasur (25 *kos* south-east of Lahore) had joined the Sikh league of 1800 against Ranjit Singh. During 1801-02 the place was four times invaded but could not be taken. In the latter year Nizamuddin was succeeded by his brother Qutb-ud-Din. The fault of the former, the troublesome character of the latter, the repeated failures and the reputation of Kasur as the mythological rival of Lahore, increased the Maharaja's desire for its conquest. In 1807 it was finally annexed with the help of Jodh Singh Ramgarhia.

Capture of Kasur.

1800 Brij Raj Deo of Jammu had submitted. In 1802 Jodh Singh of Wazirabad acknowledged the overlordship of the Maharaja. The country of the Kharrals who held forty villages about Sheikhupura and Jhang were incorporated into the Sikh dominion in 1803. The territories of the Sials of Jhang, Leiah and Chiniot were annexed in 1806. In August, 1809 Kangra was occupied; but its story will be related separately.

Other acquisitions.

Besides these, the Lahore ruler absorbed or reduced to submission many individual forts and places which are too numerous to be detailed. For instance, Pathankot and Narayangarh were captured; Phillaur and Ludhiana were occupied; Sahiwal was among the places which were frightened into allegiance. Sanewal and Phagwara were two of the places which were taken by force from helpless widows of deceased chiefs; Akalgarh and Pasrur were two, among others, acquired by escheat; Bahrampur, Shukalgarh and Dharamkot were districts wrested from their chief, Budh Singh Bhagat. Besides, raids were carried, as, for instance, across the Sutlej to the Phulkian States and blackmail was extorted. By a calculated policy of terror and aggression, Ranjit Singh annexed territories to his dominion or reduced chiefs to fealty and subservience. They were so divided as to be unable to devise schemes in order to relieve themselves from his arbitrary exactions and from forfeiture and resumption with which he seemed systematically to visit the family of every chief who died. "The effect of the operations was beneficial for the ulterior views of the aspiring Sikh, for the chiefs, as far as the Indus, began to see to what quarter their hopes and fears must thenceforward be directed: most of them at once made their election for submission to the ruler of Lahore, and withdrew from this period from further connexion with the Kabul court or its officers."

Aggressive encroachment and arbitrary exactions, 1800—1809.

[Prinsep, p. 57.] It was in the east that bounds were set to his ambition; and by the Anglo-Sikh Treaty of 1809 the Sutlej was fixed as the boundary across which he was not to be permitted to carry his arms. How this happened is related in the next chapter. For the present it may be noted that by 1809 Ranjit Singh made himself master of the Central Punjab.

Collapse of the Misls. Ranjit Singh raised the Shukarchakia *misl* to a position of primacy by allying himself with some and warring against others. It has already been narrated how the Bhangi confederacy was reduced and its possessions were annexed. Headed off the Sutlej by the Anglo-Sikh Treaty of 1809 he occupied himself with the *misls* between that river and the Indus. A brief account of the subdual of the other *misls* is given here.

(*a*) **The Ramgarhias.** Jassa Singh (the carpenter) died about 1803. With his son and successor, Jodh Singh, the Maharaja swore eternal friendship in the holy temple of Durbar Sahib. Jodh Singh, simple and brave. served Ranjit Singh faithfully in the work of conquests and the Maharaja flattered and cajoled him in every way. In 1816 Jodh Singh died and his quarrelling sons were invited to Nadaun and imprisoned. All the Ramgarhia possessions were seized.

(*b*) **The Nakais.** Ranjit Singh married a Nakai princess and for some time the relations remained cordial. In 1807 Kahn Singh, a weak man, succeeded to the *misl*. Ranjit Singh invited him to reside at his Court which, however, he refused. This was a sufficient excuse. Moreover, the Nakai estates were too close to Lahore to be successfully defended. The *misl* collapsed in 1810.

(*c*) **The Faizalpuria.** This *misl* had its possessions on both sides of the River Sutlej. Its chief, Budh Singh, uniformly declined to give his personal attendance on the Maharaja. This brought down on him the vengeance of the Lahore ruler. In

September, 1811 Dewan Mohkam Chand accompanied by Jodh Singh Ramgarhia and Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, entered the Jalandhar Doab with the declared design of seizing the Faizalpuria possessions. Budh Singh fled to Ludhiana for personal security. His forts and estates on the other side of the Sutlej passed to the Maharaja.

(*d*) **The Kanheyas** were headed by Ranjit Singh's mother-in law, Sada Kaur. Her daughter, Mehtab Kaur, presented, towards the end of 1807, the Maharaja with two sons (Sher Singh and Tara Singh), though they were never acknowledged by him as his offspring. In 1820 Sher Singh, a young man of some capacity, was virtually adopted by the Maharaja, probably with the object of finally setting aside the power of Sada Kaur. When Sher Singh approached man's estate, he clamoured for a *jagir* and separate establishment. So the Maharaja asked his mother-in-law to assign half of the lands of the Kanheya chiefship for the maintenance of the youth. She temporized; and having escaped from Shahdara (suburb of Lahore) to Batala she opened negotiations for protection with the British. The Maharaja had her arrested and imprisoned; and her lands were sequestered (1821). Thus fell the high-spirited lady. She had been his mainstay in the early part of his career. The independence she asserted and the high tone she was accustomed to assume, had for some time been irksome to the Sikh ruler in his growing fortunes, and her ruin was prepared by the course of events, no less than by her own unbending disposition. Ranjit Singh acted in the fullest degree up to the Machiavellian maxim: Kingship knows no kinship. No tie of affinity, no humane consideration could turn him aside from the determination to level down all who enjoyed patrimonies or who could assert independence, to the position of subjects and dependents.

Prince Sher Singh.

Fall of Sada Kaur.

(*e*) **The Ahluwalias.** Ranjit Singh had exchanged turbans in token of perpetual brotherhood with Fateh Singh Ahluwalia in 1802; and the latter was associated with the expeditions of the Maharaja at Kangra, Bhimber and Multan and against the Faizalpurias, the Dallewalias and the Musalman chiefs on the north-west. More than once he was left in charge of the capital during the absence of Ranjit Singh. "The quiet character of Fateh Singh," says Sir Charles Metcalfe, "who was the equal, if not superior in rank and power, of Ranjit Singh, has yielded to the bold commanding spirit of the other, and he has been the ladder by which Ranjit Singh has mounted to greatness." But the Maharaja distrusted a chief who still possessed strongholds and estates. Fateh Singh, feeling insecure at the Lahore Durbar, returned to his territory in the Jalandhar Doab (1825). On hearing of the approach of Sikh army under Fakir Aziz-ul-Din, he withdrew to the other side of the Sutlej and appealed for British protection. He was assured of protection in his Cis-Sutlej estates. The British sympathised with one who had been of much service to them in 1805-06 (*vide* next chapter). But treaty debarred interference in trans-Sutlej affairs. Ranjit Singh, on the other hand, was anxious to bring back a chief who was so dangerous in the hands of the British allies. Fateh Singh was given back his trans-Sutlej possessions (1827) and spent the next ten years as a dependent ally, dying in October, 1837. The Kapurthala House now represents the Ahluwalia *misl*.

Character and services of Fateh Singh.

(*f*) **The Dallewalia possessions** in the Jalandhar Doab were occupied on the death of the chief Tara Singh Ghyba (1807). He helped Ranjit Singh in his expeditions, particularly when the Maharaja crossed the Sutlej for the second time in 1807. But his services gave little guarantee to his wife and sons. His wife offered a stout defence in the fort of Rahon,

the Dallewalia stronghold ; but her efforts did not save her deceased husband's estates.

The story of the subjugation of the trans-Sutlej *misls* carries the same lesson in all cases : the submission of the weak to a powerful genius who was disregardful of all ties of affection, friendship or humanity in the pursuit of ambition.

Multan. Multan formed part of the Durrani Empire of Ahmed Shah. It was held by the Bhangis during 1771-79. In the latter year it was wrested from them by Taimur and given to Muzaffar Khan Sadozai. Brave and energetic, Muzaffar was to all intents and purposes the independent ruler of Multan. He came in contact with Ranjit Singh for the first time in 1802 ; having obtained a *nazarana* the Lahore chief retired. But he returned in 1805 and marched to Mahtam, twenty miles north of the city, whence, however, he withdrew on hearing of the arrival of Yaswantrao Holkar in his territory, though not before receiving Rs. 70.000. On the excuse that Muzaffar had given shelter to Ahmed Khan Sial of Jhang and had been intriguing with Qutb-ud-Din of Kasur, the Maharaja reappeared and occupied a part of the city with a view to reduce the fort (1807). Not being equal to the task the Sikh army returned to Lahore. The attempt of 1810 ended in no better result, though it was made with the declared object of capturing the place for Shah Shuja. The Maharaja retired baffled with no more than 1,80,000 rupees to soothe his mortified vanity. The enterprises of 1812, 1816 and 1817 were also fruitless. It was in 1816 that Phula Singh Akali led a storming party of fanatics resulting in the possession of the outworks of the citadel. Multan on account of its wealth was worth taking ; moreover, the disgrace of repeated failures had to be retrieved. In 1810 the Nawab had offered to place himself under British protection. Ranjit Singh fearing an alliance, proposed to

Unsuccessful attempts at conquest.

Sir David Ochterlony a joint expedition. Both offers were refused by the British. But the tenor of the Anglo-Sikh correspondence led the Maharaja to believe that he would not be interfered with in his designs on Multan.

After due preparations made during the cold weather of 1817 an army of 18,000 men under the nominal command of Prince Kharak Singh but in reality under Misar Dewan Chand, marched from Lahore in January, 1818. An exorbitant sum was demanded of the Nawab who refused and withdrew to his citadel with 2,000 men to stand a siege. The Sikh army taking Muzaffargarh and Khangarh on the way, occupied the city of Multan and invested the fort (February, 1818).

Conquest of Multan.

The *zamzama* was brought to bear upon the fort; breaches were made in the wall and the gates were blown in. On June 2, Akali Sadhu Singh, imitating Phula Singh, rushed with his followers into an out-work of the fort; the Sikh forces impressed with the success, followed and occupied the entire *fausse braye.* The breaches enabled the assailants to enter the fort. Muzaffar made a final stand with his remaining men but was slain. The citadel was then sacked and a considerable booty fell to the troops engaged in the assault. The Sikh army withdrew with the exception of a detachment under Jodh Singh Kalsia, of sufficient strength to hold the place. Sukh Dyal who had taken the farm of Jhang, was appointed to the civil government.

The Maharaja was not satisfied. He obtained only two lakhs of rupees. When the army returned to Lahore an order was issued for the restoration of the plunder. The order brought some five lakhs to the *Toshakhana.* The officers who took part in the campaign were suitably rewarded. Dewan Chand was given a *jagir*, a robe of honour and the title of *Zafar Jung.*

Kashmir. Ahmed Shah Abdali conquered Kashmir in 1752. Owing to frequent change of rulers at Kabul the

province from the last quarter of the 18th century was managed or rather mismanaged by the governor in his own independent fashion. After reducing the hill states of Bhimbar and Rajaori, Ranjit Singh made preparation (1812) for the conquest of Kashmir which at that time was governed by Ata Muhammad Khan appointed by Shah Shuja. But the next ruler Shah Mahmud (1810-18) naturally desired the expulsion of a governor who was a partisan of his rival. To realise his object the Shah sent his Wazir, Fateh Khan Barukzai, with an army which crossed the Indus at the time when Ranjit Singh was ready for a march on Srinagar. Both parties perceived the need of a compromise, if anything were to be achieved. A joint enterprise was agreed upon in which the Sikh ruler was to help with 12,000 troops receiving as reward a third part of the Kashmir plunder. Dewan Mohkam Chand was placed in command of the Sikh force. The joint army marched to the Pir Panjal range whence, however, Fateh Khan pressed on by double marches without letting Mohkam Chand know of his intention. The latter on understanding the fraud, marched quickly enough to reach in time to help Fateh Khan in the capture of Shergarh and Hariparbat. Kashmir was occupied by the Wazir in February 1813, but the Dewan had to return without any share of the spoil. The only advantage of the Sikh ruler was the capture of the person of Shah Shuja who had taken shelter with the Kashmir governor. The Wazir left the place in April of the same year leaving his brother Muhammad Azim Khan behind as governor.

Joint expedition and bitter disappointment.

Toward the end of 1813 a fresh expedition was fitted out, but its progress beyond the Pir Panjal was checked by heavy rain and snow. By the middle of 1814 preparations were completed for the third expedition. The Maharaja personally commanded one division of the army, and the other was placed

Unsuccesful efforts to conquer Kashmir.

under Dewan Ram Dyal. From Rajaori the two divisions separated ; one proceeded by way of Punch and the other by the Bahramgalla. The latter in spite of opposition at Supin reached the valley, whereas the other division under the Maharaja returned finding advance impracticable in the face of the superior force of the enemy and the heavy fall of rain. Ram Dyal, cut off from succour, behaved so gallantly that Muhammad Azim Khan came to terms and allowed him a safe conduct to the Punjab. Cunningham says (p. 155) that the army was spared by Azim out of regard for Mohkam Chand, grandfather of its commander.

Conquest of Kashmir.

Experience of two disastrous retreats made the Sikhs cautious. Preparations were made on such a scale and the expedition was undertaken in such a season as to bar out all chance of failure. In May, 1819 the three sections of the expeditionary force proceeded to subjugate the coveted valley and to wipe off two disgraceful defeats. The Brahman, Dewan Chand, who had exercised the real command at Multan, was placed in advance, the Prince Kharak Singh headed a supporting column, and Ranjit Singh himself remained behind with a reserve and for the purpose of expediting the transit of the various munitions of war. Jabbar Khan was then the governor, his brother Azim having gone to Kabul. Near Supin the opposing Afghans under Jabbar were pushed back (June 16, 1819), and the valley was occupied. Aziz-ul-Din was sent to study the climate of the valley and Dewan Devidas to organise the assessment of revenues [Chopra. 26]. Moti Ram, son of Mohkam Chand, was its first governor.

Importance of Kashmir.

Kashmir, apart from its being the centre of a flourishing shawl industry, was the intermediate stage of the trade route between the Punjab on one side and Ladakh, Iskardo and Tibet on the other. Apart from the income it brought to the Khalsa treasury, the

conquest of Kashmir meant the destruction of the largest seat of Musalman power between the Sutlej and the Indus.

Kangra. Sansar Chand, the Katotch Raja, obtained the famous fort of Kangra from Jai Singh Kanheya in 1785. During 1802-03 he more than once made a descent upon the plains and plundered the Kanheya territory but retreated to the hills on the approach of Ranjit Singh's army. The same unscrupulous ambition led him to attack the chief of Kahlur or Bilaspur who resorted to the desperate expedient of calling the aid of the Gurkhas (1805) under Amar Singh Thappa. Kangra was besieged for many years; and Sansar Chand, being reduced to extremity, invoked the assistance of the Lahore ruler. The fort which had the reputation of being impregnable had a great value in the eye of the aspiring Sikh who desired its possession. Sansar Chand, in inviting Ranjit Singh, meant to frighten the Gurkha general into withdrawal. Ranjit Singh, in accepting the invitation, thought not so much of securing the fort to the Raja as to occupy it for himself. He negotiated with Amar Singh for a joint warfare against the hill rajas, and suddenly appearing before Kangra demanded admittance as an ally (August, 1809). Once inside, he laughed at both Rajputs and Gurkhas and held it for himself. Having taken the necessary steps to secure his possession of Kangra, he returned to the Jalandhar Doab.

How Kangra was occupied.

On the death of Sansar Chand (1824), his son, Anrudh Chand, was allowed to succeed to the Katotch raj. In 1828 Raja Dhyan Singh persuaded the Maharaja to demand the hand of one of the daughters of Sansar Chand for his son, Hira Singh. Anrudh's family was in Lahore. On hearing this, he fled with his mother and sisters across the Sutlej to British protection. The Maharaja in anger confiscated all his estates. In vain did the dispossessed Raja

Death of Sansar Chand and flight of Anrudh Chand.

implore the British to intervene for the restoration of his possessions. Ranjit Singh married two of the illegitimate daughters of Sansar Chand and conferred upon a son the title of Raja with a considerable *jagir*. Anrudh Chand maintained the pride of his family but lost his principality. In the same year Hira Singh was married to a maiden of his own degree but not with a member of the Katotch family. In 1833 the son of Anrudh was induced to return and Ranjit Singh invested him with a fief of 50,000 rupees; for "the Maharaja was not disposed from nature to be wantonly harsh or from policy to drive any one to desperation."

Restoration of estates to Sansar's descendants.

Ranjit Singh carries his arms across the Indus. The above narration of events is intended to show how Ranjit Singh brought under his sway the whole of the Punjab between the Indus and the Sutlej and how he made himself supreme in the hills as well as in the plains of the Punjab proper. Having accomplished this he turned his attention to the trans-Indus tracts which kept him busy between 1818 and 1823. The contest for the Peshawar Valley, however, continued and the last battle with the Afghans was fought as late as 1837.

When Fateh Khan baulked Ranjit Singh of his share of the Kashmir plunder in 1812, the Maharaja sought revenge in another direction. Attock was then held by Jahandad Khan. Negotiations were opened with Jahandad Khan and Ata Muhammad Khan, brother of the Wazir, for the cession of the fort. They were so alarmed by the success of Fateh Khan in Kashmir that they were easily persuaded to yield the fort to Ranjit Singh (1813). The occupation of the place which commanded the passage of the Indus was essential to operations across the river. But Fateh Khan could hardly be expected to submit to such treachery without striking a blow. He came down from Kashmir and laid siege to the fort. The question of its possession

was decided in a battle at Haidaru (July 13, 1813), near Attock, in which Fateh Khan and his brother Dost Muhammad Khan, were defeated by Dewan Mohkam Chand at the head of the Sikh army. This was the first pitched battle between the Sikhs and the Afghans, and the latter's defeat boded ill for their trans-Indus possessions.

The Barukzai brothers.

Here it is necessary to say something about Fateh Khan Barukzai and his brothers, some 50 in number and all of them at the head of governments or otherwise in possession of wealth and power. The Sadozais * (descendants of Ahmed Shah Abdali) were ruling over Afghanistan, but real power was held by the members of the Barukzai family headed by Fateh Khan. As often happens in a polygamous household there was no love lost among the brothers. We clearly distinguish two parties : Fateh Khan, Azim Rhan and Dost Muhammad were on one side and were consistently hostile to Ranjit Singh, whereas Yar Muhammad Khan, Sultan Muhammad, Ata Muhammad, Jahandad Khan and Pir Muhammad Khan formed the other party and ranged themselves, as a matter of expediency, on the side of the Maharaja.

The country between the Indus and the mountains on the north-west once forming part of the Durrani empire, was now divided among a number of Muhammadan rulers who made themselves virtually independent on account of the weakness of the Kabul Government. The Peshawar Valley was held by Yar Muhammad, Sultan Muhammad, Pir Muhammad and

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* Abdali was the name of the clan or tribe, because it was traced down from one who was an *abdal* [=holy man]. One of the Abdali descendants was Saddu who was well known for his piety : and his descendants took pride in calling themselves Saduzai. Once a darvesh of Lahore called Ahmed Shah *Durra Padshah* ; and the Padshah improving on it styled himself *Durr-i-Durrani* [Pearl of Pearls]. Hence Abdali is the widest term ; a section of the Abdalis was Saduzai or Sadozai, the descendants of Ahmed Shah as the kings of Kabul were Durranis.

Jahandad Khan. Of the Derajat, parts were under the nawabs of Multan and Bahawalpur, and Dera Ismail Khan was under Abdul Sammand Khan. During 1820-21 the Derajat was attacked : Dera Ghazi Khan was seized and given to the Nawab of Bahawalpur ; Dera Ismail Khan and Mankera were also taken. Ranjit Singh was content to make the Derajat feudatory to Lahore. It was during 1834—36 that the Derajat (as also Hazara) was completely reduced. The Maharaja's authority thus extended over the right bank of the Central Indus.

Trans-Indus conquests.

Before Ranjit Singh turned his arms against the Derajat for the first time in 1820, an attack had been launched upon the Peshawar Valley. Peshawar was the bone of contention between the Lahore and Kabul Durbars, and the struggle over its possession lasted for well-nigh twenty years, and constituted the most important aspect of the relations between the said Governments. The subject is so interesting and important that it may well claim a separate detailed treatment.

The Peshawar Valley. Beginning with Lahore as the centre Ranjit Singh widened the circle of his operations till he brought under subjection the country between the Sutlej and the Indus. Having tightened his grip over that part of the Punjab, he turned to the trans-Indus land in 1818 at a time when Kabul was subject to one of its recurrent revolutions. Shah Mahmud was the ruler of Kabul for the second time from 1810 to 1818. But power was in the hands of Fateh Khan. In 1818 the Wazir, whose energy and talents had raised Shah Mahmud to the throne of Kabul, was murdered by the order of the Shah's son, Kamran. Muhmmad Azim Khan hurried back from Kashmir, expelled Mahmud and his son, and elevated Shah Ayub (1818-26) to

Murder of Fateh Khan.

the throne. Thus after the revolution it was Muhammad Azim who acquired power in place of his brother.

First Sikh attack. Taking advantage of the confusion at Kabul, Ranjit Singh crossed the Indus and entered Peshawar (November 20, 1818) which was evacuated by Yar Muhammad on the approach of the Sikh army. The Maharaja then retired placing Jahandad Khan, his old ally of Attock, in possession of Peshawar on condition of paying an annual tribute. Yar Muhammad, however, who had retreated to the Yusufzai country, returned as soon as Ranjit Singh had gone, and reoccupied Peshawar without any opposition.

In 1823 Muhammad Azim occupied Peshawar and raised the Yusufzai and Khatak tribesmen in a *jehad* against the unbelieving invaders.

Peshawar made tributary. Sending Kharak Singh to keep Azim in check, Ranjit Singh gave battle to the tribesmen near Nowshera* (March 14, 1823). It was a contested battle ; and both sides lost heavily but victory ultimately rested with the Sikhs. Situated in a hostile country, Peshawar was difficult of retention. So the Maharaja conferred it on Yar Muhammad subject to the payment of an annual tribute. Muhammad Azim died in May, 1823.

Peshawar was next disturbed in 1828-29 by a religious leader named Syed Ahmed Shah. A resident of Bareilly in the United

Syed Ahmed Shah Ghazi. Provinces he served as a petty officer of horse under Amir Khan, the Pathan freebooter. After the Pindari and Mahratta wars he visited Delhi and Calcutta, gaining some followers by his superior sanctity of life. Returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca, he devoted himself to the service of his religion and decided to wage war against the Sikh infidels. He attacked Attock in 1827 but was defeated at Saidu by Hari Singh Nalwa and Budh Singh Sindhanwalia

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* At Theri, near Nowshera [Lepel Griffin, p. 209]. But it is usually called the battle of Nowshera.

whom the Maharaja had sent in anticipation. The Syed gained great influence among the Yusufzais who attacked Peshawar and mortally wounded Yar Muhammad (1829). A Sikh force under Prince Sher Singh and General Ventura was near at hand, and saved Peshawar which was given to Sultan Muhammad. Next year, however, the Syed succeeded in wresting Peshawar from the governor and retained its possession for a few months till his own high-handed proceedings compelled him to relinquish it in November, 1830. In May, 1831 he was killed in a battle at Balakot by Prince Sher Singh.

The troubles from Syed Ahmed Shah were a passing phase. The real danger to Peshawar came from Dost Muhammad Khan who had ousted the Sadozai family and made himself master of Kabul in 1826. Two other groups of brothers of his were holding the two other centres, Peshawar and Kandahar. The recovery of the former place was the fondest desire of his heart. He had to weed out as well the danger from Shah Shuja to his newly-won authority. Shah Shuja Sadozai (grandson of Ahmed Shah) who had once been the ruler of Kabul (1803–1810), had ever since 1816 been residing at Ludhiana on a pension from the British Government ; but he had never given up the hope of re-seating himself on his ancestral throne to the exclusion of the usurpers. Complications arose in 1833 when Shah Shuja, encouraged by the contemplated attack on Herat by Persia, made the necessary preparations for the recovery of Kabul. The British advanced to him four months' pension, and in order to buy Ranjit Singh's neutrality a treaty of alliance was concluded (August, 1833) by which Shah Shuja, as the grandson of Ahmed Shah Abdali and as the future ruler of Afghanistan, formally ceded to the Maharaja the districts beyond the Indus. Muhammad defeated Shah Shuja near Kandahar in July 1834 ;

Dost Muhammad and Shah Shuja.

Ranjit Singh's treaty with Shah Shuja.

and the latter returned to his old asylum at Ludhiana in March, 1835.

The troubles and pre-occupations of Dost and Shuja gave Ranjit Singh an opportunity which he did not omit to utilize. On Shah Shuja's friendship he knew he could not rely. Dost Muhammad was hostile; Sultan Muhammad had of late evinced uneasiness as a tributary and had opened negotiations with the British. So the Maharaja struck when the two former were pre-occupied with their own troubles. A Sikh force under the nominal command of Nao Nihal Singh (grandson of Ranjit Singh) but really led by Hari Singh Nalwa, occupied Peshawar (May, 1834) and annexed it to the Sikh dominions. Sultan Muhammad went over to the side of the Dost.

Incorporation of Peshawar, 1834.

In 1832 Dost Muhammad had sought British friendship; next year, his troubles increasing, he offered submission as a dependent of Great Britain [Cunningham, 208]. His success over Shuja gave him confidence in his own strength, though it did not blind him to the value of an English alliance. Having, however, attempted in vain to prejudice the British against the Sikh ruler and to secure their assistance, the Amir came down with an army to recover Peshawar. In order to gain time for concentrating his forces on the frontier, Ranjit Singh despatched Dr. Harlan and Fakir Aziz-ul-din to negotiate an amicable settlement of the Peshawar question. As the Amir could not be propitiated with anything short of the complete cession of the valley, the negotiations, as was intended, fell through, and the envoys were kept as hostages and placed in the custody of Sultan Muhammad. But to his surprise Dost Muhammad found himself almost surrounded (May, 1835); and thinking discretion to be the better part of valour he beat a hasty retreat beyond the passes. Always apprehensive of his powerful

Unsuccessful attempts of Dost 1835: ruse of Ranjit Singh

brother, Sultan Muhammad released the Sikh envoys; and in recognition of the service he was rewarded with a *jagir* by the Maharaja.

Dost Muhammad could not remain idle. The disgrace of a retreat had sunk deep in his mind and lowered his reputation. He sounded the English once more but with no better result. Ranjit Singh in order to counteract Anglo-Afghan negotiations, humoured the Amir with the hope of retrocession of Peshawar. We read that Dost Muhammad was willing to concede so far as to hold it as a fief from the Maharaja. All such negotiations proved abortive. The Amir decided to fight at all risks. He was the more inclined to resort to arms as the Sikhs were friendly with his brother Jabbar Khan and as Hari Singh Nalwa had occupied the entrance of the Khaibar Pass and entrenched a position at Jamrud as the basis of his scheme for getting through the formidable defile. The Kabul forces were under Akbar Khan and Afzal Khan. The attack was made on the post at Jamrud (April 30, 1837). Hari Singh feigning a retreat drew the Afghans into the plains and fell upon them. But he was mortally wounded; and the opportune arrival of another portion of the Afghan army converted the confusion of the Sikhs into a rout. But the Afghans did not risk a second battle with the reinforced army of Lahore and retreated after plundering the valley for a few days. The Afghans won a fruitless victory. The Sikhs no doubt lost no territory; but they lost their most dashing general, and the loss was irreparable.

Battle near Jamrud; death of Hari Singh, 1837.

Ever since the battle of Nowshera Hari Singh Nalwa had been placed in charge of the frontier at the head of an army of about 12,000 men. His method of administration was cruel and extortionate. The army was freely and frequently used as much for suppressing revolts as for extorting revenues. A less stern method would not probably have met the requirements of

the frontier. Anyhow, Hari Singh spread the terror of his name (*Haria*) which is still used to frighten chafing children. As Warden of the Marches he followed a forward policy carrying raids and establishing frontier posts in the tribal territories. The policy of aggressive encroachment involved the Sikhs in war with the Afghans who, however, failed to take back Peshawar. The Nalwa Sardar was succeeded by Teja Singh, Teja Singh by General Avitabile. The Peshawar district was the most troublesome charge in the Punjab ; it hardly paid the cost of administration,* but its retention was a matter of prestige as well as of strategy. Avitabile by means far sterner than Hari Singh's, reduced the frontier to something like order for the first time in its history.

Hari Singh as Warden of the Western Marches.

The death of Hari Singh and the defeat of the Sikh army threw the Lahore Durbar into anxiety. Great was the zeal displayed at Lahore, the ruler of which marched in person to Rohtas, sending Dhyan Singh to Jamrud where he worked with his own hand on the foundation of a regular fort. Field batteries as well as soldiers were hurried up to Peshawar. This military demonstration was intended rather to overawe the Afghans than to meet any impending danger. Peshawar was left in Sikh possession. This was due not to any desire on the part of Dost to resign his claim to that valley but to the realisation of the fact by both Ranjit Singh and Dost Muhammad who were equally strong, that the arbitrament of the sword was not likely to be decisive and definitive. The result was that the Peshawar question passed from the hands of warriors to those of diplomats. The British were requested by the Amir to mediate for the restoration of the place. But the former were disinclined to

* See Shahamat Ali's *The Sikhs and Afghans*, p. 22. He says [1839] remittances were made from Court to pay the force employed there.

displease the Maharaja. Moreover the suspected intrigues of the Kabul ruler with the Russians turned the scale completely against him. The Government of India not only refused to interfere on behalf of Dost but brought about a league for the restoration of Shah Shuja in his place. How this happened and what resulted from the new policy will be related in the next chapter.

Conclusion: A Review. In the preceding pages the military aspect of Ranjit Singh's career has been described. The petty States were destroyed or reduced to *jagirs* or appanages under his sovereignty. The establishment of the Sikh monarchy was primarily the result of his admitted capacity as a military leader. But two external facts should not be ignored in determining the causes of his success and achievement. The Anglo-Sikh Treaty of 1809 no doubt stopped his progress eastward, but at the same time it eliminated all possibility of danger from that side, leaving him free to pursue his conquering career to the west and north of the Sutlej. Secondly, the weakness of Afghanistan caused by the incompetence of its rulers and by internal faction helped the Maharaja in establishing his authority and consolidating his power. Had there been a Dost Mohammad in the earlier part of his career, he would at least have encountered many more difficulties in his career of conquest.

Four periods of Ranjit Singh's Career.

It may be helpful to the reader to recapitulate the stages in Ranjit Singh's career. The period from 1792 to 1797 may be described as a period of regency during which he was guided mostly by his mother and Lakhpat Rai on one side and Sada Kaur on the other. Though the authority of the two former advisers was terminated in 1797, yet the second stage may be said to begin from his occupation of Lahore. From 1799 to 1809 Ranjit Singh was busy in asserting his supremacy over the Central

Punjab. In the third period (1809-23) he appears as an annexationist, conquering not only the Punjab between the Sutlej and the Indus but also the trans-Indus country except Peshawar which became tributary. It should be noted that though the Sutlej was the eastern boundary, yet the Maharaja possessed some 45 *taluqas* entire or in share with others on the British side of the river [Prinsep, p. 84]. In the last division (1824-39) of the reign, Ranjit Singh is seen at the summit of power and glory and in possession of a well-drilled and well-equipped army. Agents from Balochistan brought propitiatory presents (1829) to the Maharaja; he was invited (1830) by Baiza Bai of Gwalior to honour the nuptials of the young Sindhia ; and his alliance was valued by the paramount power of India, the English, with whose agents diplomatic interviews were held. Except the annexation of the Peshawar Valley and the subjection of Ladakh (1834-35), there occurred no campaign of any importance in the last period. This was due partly to the indifferent health of the Maharaja but mainly to the fact that by 1823 the dominions reached their natural boundaries on two sides and farther extension on the other two sides (east and south-west) involved the certainty of a war with the British which the Maharaja was not prepared to risk. With the cessation of military activities the opportunities of plunder grew limited ; and hence more attention could be paid, and was paid, to the internal administration for securing, above all, enhanced and steady flow of revenue.

Having finished the military we now pass to the other aspects of the reign—diplomatic and administrative.

CHAPTER III

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Afghanistan. The diplomatic history of Ranjit Singh's reign resolves itself into his relations with Afghanistan and the English East India Company. The first Afghan ruler with whom he came in contact was Shah Zaman who, as has been mentioned, conferred on him Lahore in recognition of service to be rendered. The next ruler with whom the Maharaja had something to do, was Shah Mahmud. In 1811 the latter crossed the Indus in order to overawe or capture his rival Shah Shuja, who had been wandering about as a dangerous fugitive and had of late taken shelter in Kashmir. Assured of the pacific intention of the Maharaja whom he met at Rawalpindi, the Sadozai ruler returned to his capital. Then followed the first Kashmir expedition which, however, tended to embitter the relations between Lahore and Kabul. From 1818, the year of the expulsion of Mahmud from his throne, the contest, as has been noted, for the Peshawar Valley began, and consequently the two neighbouring kingdoms remained in a state of war during the following twenty-one years. In the last year of the reign Ranjit Singh joined the British in their enterprise to seat Shah Shuja on the Kabul throne in place of Dost Muhammad.

Ranjit Singh's relations with the British. The need of protecting the territories of the Nawab—Vazier of Oudh attracted for the first time the attention of the British (1874) towards the Sikhs. But the proposal of the latter for a defensive alliance was rejected by the English; and hence they joined the Mahrattas. But the Second Mahratta War

impressed them with the might of the British, and in consequence some of the chiefs (Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal and Bhanga Singh of Thaneswar) allied themselves with the British and rendered admirable service against Yaswantrao Holkar. After the reverses at Dig and Farrukhabad (November, 1804) Holkar retreated to the Punjab hoping to get the Sikhs on his side. At Patiala he reaped some pecuniary profit, owing to the quarrel between Raja Sahib Singh and Rani Aus Koer. But hearing that Lord Lake was on his track and finding the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs too discreet to espouse a hopeless cause he went towards Amritsar to solicit the assistance of Ranjit Singh. It is at this stage that the history of the British connexion with Ranjit Singh begins.

British relations with the Cis-Sutlej chiefs.

After the Dasehra of 1805 the Maharaja was engaged in expeditions in the direction of Jhang and Multan when he heard of the approach of the Mahratta chief. They met at Amritsar ; and the Maharaja was all courtesy to his not very welcome guest. It is said that he was not disinclined to assist Holkar, but he was dissuaded by Fateh Singh Ahluwalia and Bhag Singh of Jind as well as by his own counsellors. The Maharaja is said to have visited in disguise the British camp on the Beas where Lake had gone in pursuit of the Mahratta and was struck by the disciplined military array. He felt that a Mahratta-Sikh combination would not be strong enough to beat the English ; and his defeat in his own territory would be disastrous to all his schemes. Neither did he desire to see his own territory a battlefield for two foreign armies. A *Gurumatta* (*vide* p. 5) was convened (1805), and it was formally decided to give up the cause of Yaswantrao Holkar who made his terms with Lord Lake (December, 1805). Through the medium of the Ahluwalia Sardar a treaty was

Yaswantrao Holkar at Amritsar.

arranged between the British on one side and Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh on the other. It was a treaty of amity (January. 1806) which provided that Holkar should be compelled to retire from Amritsar and that so long as the said chieftains conducted themselves as friends the British armies should never enter the territories of the Sardars, nor would the British Government form any plans for seizure or sequestration of their possessions or property. The Mahrattas and the much-dreaded English army left the Punjab to the relief of Ranjit Singh. It was a wise decision that he made. He had many enemies in the Punjab and his kingdom was still in its infancy. Help to Holkar would have destroyed, deferred or interrupted his policy of giving unity and coherence to the scattered Sikh elements and of moulding the Sikhs into a well-ordered state ; on the other hand, abstention from help secured the friendship of the greatest power in India.

Treaty of friendship with Ranjit Singh and Fateh Singh.

As has already been mentioned, some of the Cis-Sutlej chiefs, especially those of Jind and Kaithal, had attached themselves to the British ; they were rewarded for their services during the Mahratta War and were assured of the enjoyment of their territorial possessions. But the regime of Wellesley was followed by a period of reaction from the forward policy. The policy of ring-fence held the field from 1805 to 1813, and with particular strength during the first three years ; and the English considered their dominion and influence limited by the Jumna ; consequently the connexion with the Sirhind and Malwa chiefs virtually came to an end, so far as regarded the reciprocal benefits of alliance.

Policy of ring-fence.

Sahib Singh of Patiala and Jaswant Singh of Nabha were at feud over the possession of the village Dalodhi and some adjacent lands. The other Sirhind chiefs also took part in the quarrel. The non-interferent policy of the English would not allow

them to mediate in the dispute. Bhag Singh of Jind who was on the side of Nabha invited Ranjit Singh who crossed the Sutlej on July 26, 1806, with a large force. On the way Ludhiana, Jagraon and other places were occupied and distributed among his allies, Bhag Singh, Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, and others; Dalodhi was taken and given to Patiala; he then retired with the present of a piece of artillery and some treasure. Next year the Maharaja reappeared at the invitation of Rani Aus Koer of Patiala for settling the quarrel between he and the Raja, Sahib Singh. The Raja was forced to settle upon the Rani a *jagir* worth Rs. 50,000 per annum for the maintenance of her son; and in return Ranjit Singh received a diamond necklace and a piece of brass ordnance, named Kara Khan (September. 1807). On the return march the Maharaja seized Narayangarh, Wadhni, Zira and other places. Early next year Mohkam Chand was employed to effect a settlement of the territories which had been seized on the left bank of the Sutlej.

Two invasions of the Cis-Sutlej territory, 1806—7.

The systematic aggressions of Khalsaji (as the Maharaja preferred to call himself to signify his headship of all Sikhs) alarmed the Cis-Sutlej Sikhs who convened a meeting at Samana to discuss whether to submit to the yoke of Lahore or to seek British protection. They were more alive to the danger of political subjection than to the advantage of political unity and were not moved by the feeling of a national state of all Sikhs. So a formal deputation consisting of Bhag Singh of Jind, Bhai Lal Singh of Kaithal, Chen Singh (Dewan of Patiala) and Ghulam Hussain (representative of Nabha) waited on Seton, the British Resident at Delhi, to crave for protection (March 1808). The reply was encouraging though not decisive. Hearing this Ranjit Singh invited some of the Malwa chiefs (Jind and Kaithal) to Amritsar where they were

Cis-Sutlej States anxious for British protection.

treated with consideration and favour. But a change of British policy altered the situation (October, 1808).

The attitude of a placid spectator assumed by Cornwallis and Barlow had encouraged the Maharaja in his encroachment upon the territories between the Sutlej and the Jumna. Lord Minto was alive to the merit of a policy of non-intervention in keeping the East India Company free from embarrassments; but a deviation from it was sometimes necessary as a measure of defensive policy. By the spring of 1808 he had come definitely to hold the view that the interposition of some friendly States between the Maharaja's military domination and the peaceful sway of the English, was a measure of prudence and foresight [Chopra, 57 *sq*; and Cunningham, 137]. But such an interference would irritate or even alienate the Lahore chief who aimed at bringing all Sikhs, north and south of the Sutlej, under the aegis of his rule. The British could ill-afford to alienate him at the time: for there was afloat the rumour of a French invasion of India. In June 1807 Napoleon had concluded the Treaty of Tilsit with the Tsar arranging for an anti-British combination; and every effort was being made to win over the Shah of Persia. The French invasion backed by Persia overweighed all other considerations. Minto, in the circumstances, launched upon the policy of building up friendly alliances with the States situated on the land approach to India. So Envoys were sent to Persia, Sindh, Afghanistan and Lahore.

Lord Minto's Policy.

The objects of these missions as stated by the Governor-General were "to conciliate the princes, and to obtain their permission to enter into their territories for the purpose of opposing the French and to establish such defensive engagements with these Governments as might obtain their co-operation or at least their friendly assistance, to British military operations and to

Envoys to different States; Metcalfe to Lahore.

British cause, in general." We are concerned with the mission sent to Ranjit Singh. Charles Metcalfe left Delhi on August 12, 1808 and was received by the Maharaja at Kasur. Ranjit Singh was willing to make an alliance, offensive and defensive, against the French on two conditions : (*a*) that no interference should be allowed in his disputes with Kabul, and (*b*) that his sovereignty over the Sikh nation, north and south of the Sutlej, should be acknowledged. The first point raised no difficulty ; in regard to the second the envoy had been instructed not to commit himself in any way. Understanding the situation, Ranjit Singh at once broke up his camp and undertook his third inroad of the Cis-Sutlej country ; the envoy accompanied him up to that river. From Khai to Faridkot (which was taken and given to Sada Koer in ejection of Golab Singh) ; from Faridkot to Malerkotla (from whose chief Ataullah, a heavy money payment was exacted) ; from Malerkotla to Ambala (which was occupied and divided between Nabha and Kaithal) ; from Ambala to Shahabad and Thaneswar (where tributes were levied), Ranjit Singh marched with his army in triumph in the face of the remonstrance of the British Envoy. The Maharaja then turned back to Patiala where an exchange of turbans was made. Thence he returned to Amritsar whither he was followed by the envoy. Ranjit Singh's motives in all these were : " If the British wanted his help against the French they must be prepared to pay, so he pressed his point ; in the meantime while negotiations were going on, he wanted to occupy as much as possible, so that at the end, whatever the result, he might be left in possession of what he had actually conquered ; and he cleverly kept the envoy in his camp to weaken the resistance of the chiefs and to obtain some sort of official sanction for his enterprise ;

Third invasion of Ranjit Singh ; his views.

moreover, he resented most the disinclination of the English to allow him to carry on his concerns with his own people."*

Definitive decision of Lord Minto.

All was, however, in vain. The Maharaja's virtual acts of hostility decided the British (October, 1808); moreover, the French menace had worn off. Metcalfe was instructed to avow to the Maharaja that the country between the Sutlej and the Jumna was under British protection, and although that Government had no design to require the surrender of possessions occupied before its interposition, it must insist on the restoration of all that had been seized during the recent expedition. To back the effort of the diplomat, Col. (afterwards Sir David) Ochterlony was ordered to move with a body of troops to the frontier: and he took up a position at Ludhiana (February, 1809). An army of reserve was formed and placed under Major-General St. Leger to be prepared for any extended operations which the hostility of Ranjit Singh might render necessary. It was with great difficulty that Metcalfe could get the Maharaja to grant him interview. In January, 1809 in an interview at Lahore the envoy informed him of the advance of Ochterlony. On February 9, the Commander-in-Chief issued a warning proclamation to the effect that any further aggressions south of the Sutlej would be forcibly resisted. The Maharaja bitterly resented British action and complained that Metcalfe had come to conclude a treaty of friendship against the French and ended in thwarting his cherished designs. For some time things looked like war. But due to Aziz-ul-Din better counsels prevailed. Recently at Amritsar a body of Akalis headed by Phula Singh had attacked the sepoys in the suite of the envoy while they were celebrating the *Muharram*. The Akalis were repulsed with loss by the

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* Abstracted from Lepel Griffin's *Ranjit Singh* (pp. 177-8) and Latif's *History of the Punjab* (pp. 375-76).

handful of sepoys. The Maharaja came out with apologies. This incident made an impression on him as to the unfitness of his own troops to cope with those under European discipline. This coupled with the adroitness of the diplomatist who is said to have assured him of freedom of action in trans-Sutlej lands and with the fear that, if longer resisted, offers of British protection might be made to some of the Punjab chiefs, brought the great Sikh to terms; and the Treaty of Amritsar was signed on April 25, 1809. Perpetual friendship was declared between the British Government and the State of Lahore; the latter was to be considered, with respect to the former, on the footing of the most favoured powers. The Sutlej was to be the dividing line; in the north of it the British were not to interfere; while on the left bank, the Maharaja would never maintain, in the territory which he occupied there, more troops than were necessary for the internal duties of administration, nor commit or suffer any encroachments on the possessions or rights of the chiefs in its vicinity. By proclamations (May 3, 1809 and August 22, 1811) the Sirhind and Malwa chiefs were guaranted against encroachment by Ranjit Singh and by one another; while the British cast their protection over them, they were to co-operate as allies with the former in times of need.

Treaty of Amritsar, 1809.

The Treaty of Amritsar was faithfully observed by both parties. But it brought the British too near the State of Lahore to remain unaffected by the disorder and vicissitudes which might arise in the latter; moreover, the extension of the British influence to the Sutlej made them take interest in affairs beyond, in Sind, in the navigation of the Indus, in Bahawalpur and in Afghanistan. This gave rise to future complications and ultimately under the weak successors of the

Effects of the Treaty of Amritsar.

Maharaja had an adverse effect on the independence of the kingdom of Lahore. In its immediate effect the Treaty left behind a legacy of distrust and suspicion. Agents from Gwalior and Holkar continued to show themselves at Lahore whose King was also believed to be instigating the chiefs of Malwa and Sirhind. Ranjit Singh was deeply chagrined at the wresting of the Malwa from the Manhja Sikhs over whom he longed to extend his dominion. By degrees, however, the Maharaja reconciled himself to the inevitable. In 1811 presents were exchanged between Minto and Ranjit Singh; and in 1812 Ochterlony was the latter's guest at the marriage of his son, Kharak Singh.

During 1812-19 Ranjit Singh remained busy with military operations on the west and north. As noted in the previous chapter, Sada Koer's estates (*vide* p. 14) were seized (1821). She possessed, among other places, Wadhni on the left bank of Sutlej. This was a place which Ranjit Singh himself had conferred on his mother-in-law in September, 1808. When on the imprisonment of the lady his agents took forcible possession of it in 1822, the British interfered on the ground that she represented the independent interests of the Kanheya confederacy on their side of the Sutlej and, therefore, had a right to their protection. The Sikhs were ejected by a detachment of British troops acting on behalf of the captive widow. The Maharaja wisely avoided a collision; though he busied himself for some time with defensive preparations, he represented the matter to the Governor-General. In 1828 the place was restored to him.

Quarrel over Wadhni.

In 1825-26 and again in 1828-29 complications threatened to arise on account of the shelter taken and the aid asked for by Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, Qutb-ud-Din of Kasur and Anrudh Chand of Katotch from the British (*vide*, p. 19). The latter, however, saw no reason for violating the treaty of 1809. In 1826 the Maharaja fell ill and was attended by Dr. Murray, an army

surgeon at Ludhiana,* of whom the former enquired many details about the Burmese War and of the Sepoy Mutiny at Barrackpur. Lord Amherst being in the hills for the benefit of his health, Ranjit Singh felt curious to know the probable cause of His Excellency's presence so near his kingdom. Exchange of complimentary missions marked the friendship between the neighbours: Dewan Moti Ram and Fakir Imam-ud-Din went to Simla, and in return Captains Wade and Pearson and Surgeon Gerard came to Lahore (1827). Dispute having arisen regarding Chamkaur and Anandpur-Makhowal, the Maharaja's claim to these was recognised whereas in exchange Ferozepur was left to the British.

Lord Amherst and Ranjit Singh.

The thirties, or rather the last nine years of the reign, bristle with pregnant events, diplomatic manoeuvres and strained relations. Moorcroft, the adventurous traveller,† had pointed out (1820) the value of the Indus as a highway of commerce. Ten years later, action was first taken to explore the possibilities of the river and the neighbouring regions; and this happened to be at a time when Ranjit Singh after completing the conquests in other directions, was entertaining designs on Shikarpur in particular and Sindh in general. Lord William Bentinck was then the Governor-General. In return for the present of a shawl-tent given through Lord Amherst by Ranjit

Burnes explores the trading value of the Indus; reaches Lahore with presents.

*Ludhiana since Ochterlony's occupation of it, was an important advanced outpost of the British. A Political Agent resided there carrying on his duty under the direction first of the Agent at Ambala, then of the Resident at Delhi. Captain Wade held the post at Ludhiana for a long time.

Dr. G.L. Chopra has rendered a valuable service in making the letters of Dr. Murray and other documents available to the public [*The Punjab as a Sovereign State*, pp. 245-340.]

†Moorcroft was the Superintendent of the Company's Studs in India, passed through Ladakh to Balkh where he died of fever. His *Travels* was published in 1841.

Singh, the King of England sent a present of dray horses accompanied by a letter of friend-ship from Ellenborough. the President of the Board of Control. On the arrival of these presents Bentinck who had already in mind the question of the commercial value of the Indus decided to despatch the same by way of the Indus and Lieutenant Alexander (afterwards Sir Alexander) Burnes who held the office of Assistant Political Agent in Cutch, was to take them to Lahore by the river route through Sindh whose Amirs, however, opposed the passage but their opposition was overborne. Bentinck might have had another motive: the suspected designs of Russia (in alliance with Persia) on India made it highly desirable to extend the knowledge of the British people as to the state of things on the frontier and of the facilities of military defence offered by that great river barrier. Burnes reached Lahore on July 17, 1831. He reported the superiority of that river over the Ganges. Then took place the meeting at Rupar between the Governor-General and the Maharaja (October 25—31, 1831). Both sought the interview but from different motives. The former wanted to give to the world (at least to the prospective invaders of India) an impression of complete unanimity between the two States; the latter wished to strengthen his status by showing to the Sikh public that his dynasty was acknowledged as the proper head of the Khalsa by the predominant English rulers [Cunningham, 191-92]. Ranjit Singh obtained a written assurance of the perpetual friendship of the British. But he had another object at the back of his mind in which he, however, failed. He wanted to sound the Governor-General regarding his designs on Sindh. In this respect Bentinck, when asked, took care not to divulge his own schemes. He had already directed Colonel Pottinger recently (appointed Resident in Sindh) to proceed to Hyderabad to negotiate the opening of the lower Indus to

The Rupar meeting; Bentinck and Ranjit Singh.

commerce. The treaty was arranged on April 20, 1832. It was mainly commercial in character.

Soon after the Rupar meeting Captain Wade was deputed to the Maharaja to remove from his mind all apprehensions regarding British dealings with the Amirs of Sindh and to propose the navigation of the Sutlej in continuation of that of the lower Indus. This resulted in the conclusion of the Indus Navigation Treaty of December 26, 1832, for the common use of the Sutlej and the Indus for commerce. This treaty was revised in 1834 (November 29) by which tolls were levied on boats in place of tariff, and a British officer resided opposite Mithankot. Ranjit Singh gave his assent to these treaties with the greatest reluctance. "He did not desire to appear as if in opposition to his allies of many years, but he did not seek to conceal from Captain Wade his opinion that the commercial measures of the English had really abridged his political power, when he gave up for the time being the intention of seizing Shikarpur." It was for the time being that the intention on Shikarpur was given up. The story of how he made a definite attempt in the same direction and how he was finally headed off remains to be narrated.

Sutlej-Indus Navigation Treaties.

Shikarpur was the immediate objective of attack and the conquest of Sindh was the ultimate realization of his ambition. Shikarpur was a commercial centre through which the trade between India and the Afghan country by the Bolan Pass passed. This might have been one of the reasons for its conquest. But the Maharaja justified his action on other grounds. Only in the twenties had the Talpur Amirs (Hyderabad, Khairpur and Mirpur) usurped it on account of the weakness of the Kabul authorities. His claim to it, so he argued with Wade, was superior to theirs, he being the paramount of the Barukzais of the Indus.

Ranjit Singh's design on Shikarpur; his claims and arguments

Another argument of Ranjit Singh was that the river below Mithankot was not Indus but Sutlej, and Shikarpur being to the west of it the British were not warranted in thwarting his designs. However the arguments, whatever be their value, were of no avail. Neither did the Maharaja abandon his purpose. As noted in the previous chapter (p. 24), Shah Shuja before setting out on his Afghan enterprise concluded (August, 1833) a treaty with the ruler of Lahore one of whose objects in this respect was to hinder English projects in Sindh: for the Sadozai rulers were the suzerain of the Amirs. Shah Shuja defeated the Sindhians in January, 1834 on his way to Kandahar. After this defeat Nur Muhammad of Hyderabad expressed his readiness to surrender Shikarpur to Ranjit Singh on condition of his guarantee against any future encroachment of Shah Shuja. But the main difficulty was with the British. In 1834 Gujar Singh Majithia was sent with presents to Calcutta; and one of his objects probably was to ascertain the general opinion about his designs on Sindh. But the English were determined to prevent hostility against a state to which they were bound by interest and goodwill; and English interest was on the increase. In 1835 Colonel Pottinger was allowed to survey the coast of the delta of the Indus; and in 1836 Burnes was sent on an exploring mission to the countries bordering on that river. In the latter year an excuse was found by the Maharaja for making an advance, a final one, in the direction of Shikarpur. The Mazaris, a troublesome and predatory tribe, occupied the right bank of the Indus below Mithankot. For some time past they had been occasionally attacking the Sikh outposts, aided secretly by the Amirs of Khairpur. Not being restrained, the governor of Multan took and garrisoned Rojhan, their stronghold (August, 1836). Soon

Ranjit Singh felt his way under cover of Mazari aggression.

after, the Sikhs went south to Ken which was beyond the proper limit of the tribe. There also seemed every likelihood of further aggression; and a war between the Sikhs and the Sindh Amirs threatened to break out. The British intervened. Political interest would not allow the extension of Sikh power along the course of the Indus. In curbing the Mazaris the Sikhs, so it was avowed, had effected an object of general benefit; but a war between the Sikhs and the Amirs was calculated to frustrate the primary commercial object of the British: and if the Maharaja persisted in quarrelling with the Amirs, the British Government would be obliged to advance a subsidiary force for the protection of Sindh territories.* Captain Wade proceeded to Lahore to explain matter personally. Ranjit Singh ultimately and unwillingly yielded (December, 1836), and agreed to let things remain on their own footing, retaining however Rojhan and Mazari territory while the fortress of Ken was destroyed.

The British checked and Ranjit Singh yielded.

As in 1809 so in 1836, it was the fear of the British power which made Ranjit Singh give way. His credit lay in realising his own limitations. Of those who advised him to resist he enquired what had become of the two hundred thousand spears of the Mahrattas! He realised that in the long run Sindh would be absorbed, and felt apprehensions, in being thus encircled, about the safety of his own kingdom in future. But sagacious as he was, he saw in that possibility a greater reason for maintaining outward friendship with the British. He invited the Governor-General, the Governor of Agra (Sir Charles Metcalfe) and the Commander-in-Chief (Sir Henry Fane) to be present at the nuptials of his grandson, Nau Nihal Singh (March, 1837); but, however, only the last

Character of the Anglo-Sikh alliance.

* These views were expressed in the Despatches of the Government of India to Colonel Pottinger and Captain Wade both dated Sept. 26, 1836.

named official could attend. Despite the apparent amity, the relations between the two States were strained. Though he withdrew from Sindh, yet he still talked of resuming hostilities. Besides this, Lord Auckland had other reasons for suspecting the Maharaja. "His acceptance," wrote the Governor-General on October 7, 1836 to the President of the Board of Control, "of a mission from Nepal, his admission of Vakils from our protected Sikhs (Cis-Sutlej), his requests for large importations of arms, his successful aggressions on his neighbours and his growing French connexion were all matters of painful consideration"* Sometime back † Ranjit Singh had also been suspected of correspondence with Russia. Though the crisis of 1836 was got over, the real relations between the two neighbouring States were far from cordial; and the Maharaja, during the last three years of his reign, showed a tendency to "pursue an independent line of action, irrespective of the English interests and goodwill."

Grounds for Auckland's suspicion.

However, it was during the same period that Ranjit Singh was induced or obliged seemingly to co-operate with the British in the reinstatement of Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul. A detailed description of the circumstances leading to the First Afghan War does not fall within the scope of this book. But some of the broad features such as would throw light on the Anglo-Sikh dealings may briefly be noticed. The battle near Jamrud (1837)

The situation in the thirties.

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* Dr. Chopra quotes from the letters of the Governor-General *vide The Punjab as a Sovereign State*, pp. 78—79, *footnote*. The French connexion refers to the letter of Louis Phillpe sent through Allard by which the latter was appointed agent of France at the Court of Lahore, 1835.

† When, in the course of his journey, Moorcroft was in Ladakh, 1821, he became possessed of a letter from the Russian Minister, Count Nesselrode to Ranjit Singh. The correspondence was of a purely commercial character.

witnessed the last attempt made by Dost Muhammad to recover Peshawar by force. The relations between Lahore and Kabul remained hostile, those between Calcutta and Lahore were strained. The Maharaja watched with anxiety the result of the appeal made by the Dost to the British to mediate for the peaceful restoration of Peshawar. Lord Auckland's reply was at first frigid. The Governor-General told (1836) the Dost that it was not the practice of the British to interfere in the affairs of neighbouring States. But ere long a new factor became clamant—the possibility of a Perso-Russian invasion of India. In the circumstances the friendship of Kabul was sought for the defence of India. Burnes went and stayed at Kabul from September 1837 to April 1838. But as Dost Mohammad put forward the restoration of Peshawar as the *sin qua non* of his alliance and as the Government of India was unwilling further to displease Ranjit Singh who had recently been headed off Shikarpur, the negotiations fell through and Burnes was recalled. Dost Mohammad courted Russian alliance; and the British decided to erect Afghanistan into a friendly buffer state with their pensioner Shah Shuja as its ruler. The Maharaja was asked to join the Afghan enterprise. He liked the idea, which Auckland favoured in the beginning, of making use of Shah Shuja at the head of a Lahore army with the proclaimed support of British India. But the plan changed. The British were to be the principal actors and he was to play a subordinate part. British influence would be established in Afghanistan; it was already an accomplished fact in Sindh; thus, in other words, his kingdom was to be encased in the iron arms of the British. These were disturbing thoughts, and he is said to have shed tears.

The Maharaja's misgivings; assent to the Tripartite alliance.

However, Sir William Macnaghten who had gone to Lahore told him that his Government had decided upon the course; and the Maharaja afraid of being left in the cold.

signed the Tripartite Treaty (June 26, 1838). His alliance with the British was not one of convenient choice but was founded on political necessity. Towards the end of the same year the Maharaja met the Governor-General at Ferozepur where the British Force was assembled and the interview was marked, as on previous occasions, by the utmost courtesy and cordiality, the Maharaja comparing the Anglo-Sikh friendship to a delicious apple in which the red (British) and yellow (Sikh) colours are so happily blended.

The Tripartite Treaty of 1838 to which the three parties were the Government of India, Shah Shuja and Ranjit Singh, was an enlarged version of the treaty concluded between the last two in 1833. The Maharaja was formally assured of the possession already conquered by him—Kashmir, Peshawar, Multan, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bannu ; the hope of gaining Shikarpur was finally extinguished, but in lieu thereof and in return for the aid to be furnished to Shah Shuja he was to receive money payments. Alliance was made but suspicion lingered. The British could not trust Shah Shuja to the Sikhs lest he should be used for Sikh rather than for British objects. So it was arranged that the Shah was to accompany the British army which was to proceed *via* Shikarpur and the Bolan Pass ; whereas the Shah's son, Taimur, was to be with the Sikh army going *via* the Khaibar. The Sikhs decided to do as little as they could and to gain as much advantage out of the enterprise as they could. It was with difficulty that the Sikh auxiliary force was collected at Peshawar and placed under the command of Nau Nihal Singh and it finally forced through the Khaibar Pass. The other army took Kandahar in April, 1839. This was the last report Ranjit Singh was destined to hear about the expedition. For on the very day on which the army set out from Kandahar for Ghazni Ranjit Singh breathed his last (June 27, 1839).

Provisions of the Tripartite Treaty of 1838.

Parts taken by the Sikhs in the First Afghan War.

Death of Ranjit Singh.

CHAPTER IV.

CIVIL ADMINISTRATION.

Ranjit Singh as a Civil Administrator. By 1824 Ranjit Singh "possessed a broad dominion, and an instructed intellect might have rejoiced in the opportunity afforded for wise legislation, and for consolidating aggregated provinces into one harmonious empire...... He troubled himself not at all with the theory or the practical niceties of administration, and he would rather have added a province to his rule than have received the assurances of his English neighbours that he legislated with discrimination in commercial affairs and with a just regard for the amelioration of his ignorant and fanatical subjects of various persuasions."*

Cunningham's view.

Prinsep's estimate of the Maharaja.

Then again Prinsep writes: "The want of a generalizing mind, to refer things to fixed principles, and to lead to the formation or adoption of systems, and a deficiency of the intelligence resulting from education, or from habitual converse with men of high cultivation, have been the main defects of his character, and are the causes of Ranjit Singh's Government being based on no solid forms and institutions which can be reckoned upon to carry on the machine when the present regulator of all is removed from the scene." Remarks such as these should not lead one to suppose that there existed no administrative system worth the name during the reign of Ranjit Singh. His genius no doubt manifested itself in military and diplomatic transactions; and he possessed no pre-eminent ability in civil organisation. But there was established a working system of administration which

Wherein does the truth lie?

* Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs*, pp. 167-68; Prinsep's *Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab*, p. 187.

ensured peace and order in the Punjab, and which was an improvement upon the old state of things; and the Maharaja did concern himself with the welfare and prosperity of his subjects, especially of the peasantry. The administrative system was marked by some defects; it might have possessed even more than an ordinary share of the imperfections which pertain to all human institutions. But on the one hand, the above remarks of Cunningham and Prinsep need qualification; and, on the other, in passing judgment we have to bear in mind the circumstances under which the Maharaja had to work. Engaged in perpetual activity of war and military enterprises which afforded scope to the peculiar aptitudes of his turbulent subjects, he had little time left for evolving a well-organised type of civil administration.

The Maharaja's handicaps.

Secondly, it should be pointed out that he had to build anew. The social and administrative chaos into which the Punjab had sunk before the rise of Ranjit Singh made the task of civil reconstruction one of peculiar difficulty requiring for its success patient labour of years. "All that was educated and refined," writes Prinsep, "had disappeared from the Punjab before Ranjit Singh was born." In view of these considerations one might well expect to find the administrative system defective. But in the last period of the reign we find a tolerable machinery of administration in operation, with a central Secretariat at the capital; the Maharaja took a lot of interest in the revenue and judicial administration; he himself visited or sent out ministers to various parts of the kingdom for inspection and report; he issued instructions to kardars, jaghirdars and farmers of revenue to keep constantly in view the happiness of the people, particularly the cultivators, and to army officers to restrain troops from destroying crops in their line of march.* Lastly, apart from the personal solicitude for

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* Dr. G.L. Chopra's *The Punjab as a Sovereign State*, pp. 220-21, *footnote*.

his subjects, his judicious selection of officers made pu, to a certain extent, for the defects in the administrative machinery.

In passing, a few words may be said regarding the last point—selection of officers. Fateh Singh Kalianwala who died in the successful storm of Narayangarh (1807) is said to have advised Ranjit Singh never to appoint any Jat Sikh to civil work. Whatever be the truth of the story, he observed the principle in practice. The Sikhs were employed for military service ; but civil and diplomatic work were usually entrusted to Hindus (particularly Brahmins) and Muhammadans ; for, it was these classes of men who were endowed with any hereditary talent for government.* In the chapter on the Court of Ranjit Singh mention will be made of the persons who occupied positions of authority and confidence in the council of the Maharaja.

Civil Service Officials.

The Administrative Arrangement. "With respect to the policy and internal government of Ranjit Singh," writes Prinsep, "the most remarkable feature is the entire absence of anything like a system or principle in his management..... what he has possessed himself of, he subjects to no systematic administration." This is rather a sweeping remark ; the best answer that can be given is to state the facts we are possessed of, leaving the reader to make his own conclusions.

After the completion of the conquests the kingdom came to be divided into four provinces or subahs—Lahore, Multan, Peshawar and Kashmir. About the last three there is no difference of opinion. But Shahamat Ali† writing in the last year of the reign says that besides the last three there were four other provinces—Jalandhar Doab (in charge of Misr Rup Lal), the Manjha (districts around

Administrative Divisions.

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* See Lepel Griffin's *Ranjit Singh*,pp. 17—117 ; Chopra, p. 18.

†*An Historical Account of the Sikhs and Afghans*, pp. 6.7 ; Dr. Chopra's *The Punjab as a Sovereign State*, pp. 135, 139.

Amritsar in charge of Lehna Singh Majithia), Wazirabad (under Suchet Singh) and the country lying between the Chenab and the Jhelum (under Raja Gulab Singh). But Dr. Chopra seems to think that these were districts (taluqas) or large areas (perghanas) included in the province (subah) of Lahore. Each subah was divided into taluqas and each taluqa contained 50 to 100 mauzas. At the head of each subah was a Nazim ; and the charge of a taluqa was vested in a Kardar. There was a Kotwal usually attached to each taluqa ; and in large cities and important stations were placed qilladars or foujdars. Of the provincial officers the kardars were the most important. Nazim's functions were "of an appellate character and of a more general nature," whereas a Kardar was in touch with the people whose life could be made pleasant or unpleasant by him. This was due not only to the importance of the office but also to the variety of the powers he wielded : for a kardar was a revenue collector, a judge and magistrate and an excise officer all rolled into one. Of these his fiscal duties were the most important ; corrupt judgments or insufficient police were evils which might be overlooked even supposing they excited attention ; but a kardar in arrears was an offender almost beyond the hope of pardon. The result in many cases was that he exacted money from the people to the utmost limits of toleration ; and as he united in himself various governmental functions, he could do more things with impunity than would have been possible had there been separation of functions.

The Kardar and his functions.

Facts about the local administration.

The nature of the local administration depended upon the personal equation of the officers. It also varied with local exigencies and with the distance from the capital. It is misleading to generalise from the instances of the tyrannical nazims or kardars ; and it is unjust to ignore the local conditions of the kingdom in estimating the administration. The

officers who were reputed for efficient administration were Sawan Mal of Multan, Misr Rup Lal of Jalandhar, Amar Singh Majithia of Hazara, and Lehna Singh Majithia of the Manjha tract. Though Sawan Mal was a beneficent governor, his son Mulraj (in charge of Jhang included in Multan) was extortionate. Hari Singh Nalwa, as governor of Kashmir, was oppressive; but Moti Ram tried his best to improve the condition of the province with little appreciable effect; for this neither the Maharaja nor Moti Ram could be blamed. The administrative disorganisation under the Afghans, and the chronic poverty of the Kashmiris made the task a difficult one. Again what sufficed to maintain order and authority in Lahore Subah failed of the desired effect in the province at Peshawar. Hence Hari Singh's and Avitabile's methods as governors of that province had to be severe; and there the army and the gibbet were the two chief instruments of administration. The geographical situation of the subah and the turbulent character of the inhabitants made recourse to exceptional methods unavoidable. Lastly, on account of the defective means of communication the control of the Central Government over distant parts was lax: thus it happened that Lahore was better administered than Multan which again was in a better condition than the other subahs.

These are the main facts we have to bear in mind regarding the local administration. Coming to Central Government we have to note that the Maharaja was assisted by the ministers.

The Central Government.

It was a one-man rule; the entire direction of affairs, foreign and domestic, was on the tongue of His Highness [Shahamat Ali, p. 14]. But his ministers were men of wisdom and intelligence; the Maharaja was possessed of penetration and judgment, vigour and vigilance. He bestowed great attention on the administration, particularly on revenue and audit. He had newswriters in every part of his dominion, and the news of the foreign courts

were read out to him in the morning. In the early part of the reign there was no system of official records. Dewan Bhawani Das organised (1808), for the proper transaction of business, the administration into departments; and towards the end there were ten Daftars for civil and military government; and the Deorhe was similarly organised. Thus in course of time there came into being a Central Secretariat with ministers in charge of the departements; and the Maharaja was above them all. In the last part of the reign Raja Dina Nath was in charge of the Finance Department, Dhayan Singh of the Deorhe and Faqir Aziz-ul-Din of Foreign Affairs.

The Finance Department. Ranjit Singh is said to have established a regular treasury at the suggestion of Yaswant Rao Holkar (1805). But the work could not be taken in hand before 1808. Before that date the territorial revenues used to be entrusted to a banker of Amritsar, Ramanand by name. Ranjit Singh went far beyond the advice of Yaswant Rao. Bhawani Das, appointed Dewan in 1808, organised and put into operation a regular Finance Department which came to have five Daftars (1) The first was concerned with revenue receipts and was called *Daftar-i-Abwab-i-Mal* which was divided into two sections : one dealing with the land revenue (*taluqaat*) and the other with all other sources of income (*sairat*). (2) To the *Daftar-i-Tahwilat* were submitted accounts of income obtained and expenditure incurred by the officials. (3) The *Daftar-i-Taujihat* dealt with the expenses of the royal household and included *Khilats* awarded to officials. (4) The *Daftar-i-Mawajib* kept records of the disbursements made to services, civil and military, high or low. (5) The *Daftar-i-Roznamcha-i-Ikhrajat* kept accounts of daily expenditure under several miscellaneous heads.

Here is a rough description of the functions of the several sections of the Finance Department. Official records came to

take the place of verbal transaction of business. The Finance Minister (Dewan) became one of the most important functionaries. Bhawani Das and Dina Nath held the office in succession. The Maharaja personally took a good deal of interest in revenue and audit. It is difficult to resist the impression that this side of the administration received a greater amount of attention than any other.

Revenue and its sources. The royal fisc was filled from two broad sources—*taluqaat* and *sairat*. The former was land revenue and the latter included all other sources of income. The first is important enough for a separate treatment. The main items following under *sairat* were: *Nazrana* (tributes and presents), *Zabti* (confiscations), *Abkari* (excise on intoxicants), *Chaukiyat* (customs and transit duties), *Wajuhat-i-moqarari* (registration fees). *Nazarana* covered not only occasional presents (cash or otherwise) but also the regular tributes paid by the jaghirdars. Hence the income was large. According to Shahamat Ali this source alone brought more than 87 lakhs to the treasury. Confiscations of the estates of the deceased or guilty sardars are said to have formed also a considerable source of income.

Sources other than land.

According to Prinsep, *chaukiyat i.e.*, duties on goods gave a revenue of something like 19 lakhs of rupees. Lepel Griffin fixes the figure at a little above 16 lakhs, and the cost of collections at nearly 7 per cent of the total. In view of what we read in other books it seems that the State derived a considerable revenue from *chaukiyat*; the total figure stood in the neighbourhood of 20 lakhs. Duties were levied under 48 heads on almost all articles, luxuries and necessaries; thus they pressed heavily on the poor. Lepel Griffin writes: "The mode of collection was extremely vexatious, the country being covered with custom houses,

Excise and transit duties.

at which merchants were treated with the utmost insolence and oppression. An article paid duty on being taken into a town, a second time on being taken to the shop, and a third time on re-export." As against this we may quote the opinion of H. T. Prinsep who wrote in 1834: "Nevertheless his (Ranjit Singh's) extortions are directed chiefly against the old Sikh families and his own state officers; merchants and traders are protected, and the duties and taxes to which they are subjected are not for the most part immoderate." We may quote the opinion of another contemporary, Lieutenant-Colonel Steinbach who was in the service of Ranjit Singh: "Every chief exercises the privilege, by prescription, of taxing trade; yet the duties, though levied at every ten or twenty miles, are light. To save themselves the trouble of constantly recurring payment, the merchants generally contract for the conveyance of a caravan of their goods from one point of the country to another, the party who takes charge of them paying all the duties through the state which they pass; should any chief ever impose a vexatious tax, the conductor of the caravan has the power of changing the route, and conveying the goods through the possessions of one who has the power to protect, and inclination to encourage, the transit of traffic through his domains."

Profits of justice.

The profits of justice comprehended under the title of *Wajuhat-i-moqarari* were derived from (*a*) *jareemana* (fines) imposed on the guilty, and *shookarana* (present of gratitude) on those who obtained relief and redress (*vide* p. 58), and (*b*) charges (*Moharana*) levied on petitions for affixing the seals on all kinds of private contracts. Prinsep says that *moharana* brought 5 lakhs and 77 thousand rupees to the fisc.

It is dfficult to ascertain the total revenue of the State. Probably it was $2\frac{1}{2}$ or about 3 crores of rupees including the land revenue which amounted to at least a crore and a quarter.

The Land Revenue System. The practice of *Batai* (simple division of the crop) was generally in vogue in the early part of the administration up to the year 1823. A share of the crops was collected for the State and necessarily the collection was in kind. From 1824 to 1834 the practice of *Kankut* prevailed. According to this, the standing crops were appraised at the market rate at the harvest time, and the State demand was realized in money. The proportion which the State demanded differed in the various parts of the kingdom. Both the practices gave ample scope for the caprice, dishonesty and tyranny of the collectors; and the annual revenue fluctuated according to the produce of the year and the prevailing market rates. To prevent these the system of farming was resorted to in 1834. Farming existed from the early part of the century. But the earlier farming applied to the outlying districts where Ranjit Singh's authority was imperfectly established; and usually favourites held the contracts for a year. The later farming introduced in 1834 was meant to supersede the previous practices as a general system; and the contract with farmers was ordinarily for not less than three years and not more than six years. The collection was made twice a year at the *Rabi* (summer) and the *Kharif* (winter) seasons; and the work of collection was conducted by the district officers, the kardars assisted by the maqaddams, patwaris and kanungos. The kardars were responsible for the due collection of the revenue to the central authority. The collecting officers of the lower grade received, besides pay, a commission of about five per cent of the total collection.

The three practices.

What did the State share usually amount to? It varied according to the agricultural conditions and facilities of the localities. such as fertility of the soil, means of irrigation, etc. In the opinion of Dr. Chopra it varied from $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{6}$ of gross produce in the subah of Multan;

State demand.

in Lahore it went up to 50 per cent; in the subah of Peshawar it was about 40 per cent. Besides this, *abwabs* (cesses) were levied, and they varied from five to 15 per cent of the revenue.

European officers have pointed out the oppression of the peasantry. It is impossible to ignore their opinion. Here is quoted an extract from the *Punjab* by Lieutenant-Colonel Steinbach who was in the service of Ranjit Singh : "The Maharaja pressing upon the provincial administrators for their quota of revenue, and these authorities, who were armed with the terrible power of life and death, in their turn grinding the farmers with their exactions, the condition of the peasantry, whom the farmers in like manner squeezed for rents, was always the most abject and pitiful that can be conceived......The rabble soldiery, placed at his disposal for the defence of the portion of the state committed to his custody and government, were continually employed to coerce the zamindars.........The revenue is in too many instances collected *vi et armis*, and sometimes falls short of the amount estimated. As a consequence of a frequent deficiency of revenue, arrears and irregularity distinguish the adjustment of the accounts in every department of the State."

Administration of Justice Our information about the judicial structure is meagre; such information as we possess may be stated briefly. At the bottom were the Panchayets which were the arbitration courts in the villages. They had no legal existence; but long standing custom had sanctified them; and they had a strong hold on the social life of the people. By persons dissatisfied with the Panchayet decisions the kardars and, above them, the Nazims could be approached for the adjudication of disputes concerning inheritance, boundaries of land and payment of revenue. There was a separate class of judicial officers, called *Adalatis*, who were probably stationed at the provincial headquarters. These three classes of officers decided civil as

Different Courts of Justice.

well as criminal cases. At the capital was the *Adalat-i-Ala* above which stood the ministers; and at the top of all, was the Maharaja. To redress grievances he had a place at the palace accessible to all where petitions were lodged and received into a box, the key of which was kept in his own possession. This enabled him to hear complaints and distribute justice.

The checks on corruption and injustice.

Dr. Chopra mentions three facts which, he thinks, did much to prevent or mitigate injustice to the people. Firstly, the tenure of service of the officers depended on the pleasure of the sovereign, and bad reputation made them liable to be dismissed; secondly, the Maharaja personally went on unexpected tours; and thirdly, he deputed special officers to different districts for the purpose of hearing complaints and deciding cases of particular importance. The value of these points in checking local corruption and tyranny should not be strained too far. The same author points out the additional merit of the judicial processes not being dilatory and expensive; and this was what made the arrangement congenial to the temper of the people. Cases no doubt were quickly decided; but whether or not speedy injustice is better than dilatory justice is another question. Expenses were not so small as the remark of Dr. Chopra might lead one to suppose. For this and other points regarding the administration of justice, the following quotation from Steinbach will suffice: "Custom and caprice are substituted for the *lex scripta*, and much injustice is necessarily the result. As there is a strong disinclination to inflict capital punishment, crimes and trespasses are generally atoned for by fines, levied according to the means of the offender, whose property is attached, and his family placed under restraint to enforce payment. The adoption of this mode of chastisement is preferred by the rulers for the additional very satisfactory

Contemporary opinion of the administration of justice.

reason that the fines form a branch of revenue. But it is not the criminal alone who pays. When the innocence of an arraigned individual deprives the judge of a pretext for lodging a heavy impost, he exacts from the prisoner a present of gratitude called *Shookrana*. In civil cases pecuniary contributions are also levied. The plaintiff if he carries his point, pays the *Shookrana*, and the defendant is mulcted as a punishment for being in the wrong, and consuming the judge's time. Mutilation is sometimes resorted to—to the extent of cutting off the hands, the nose, or the ears; but even in respect to this kind of penalty, money is found to be efficacious. A tolerable bag-full of rupees is often accepted as compensation in full for the retention of a limb or a feature. Highway robbery and burglary are visited by the demand of a sum equivalent to the value of the property taken away; but should opposition be raised by the chief on whom the demand is made, the sirdar, whose subject has suffered, proceeds to retaliate by driving away many heads of cattle from the offender's lands."

Population : three elements. The population of Ranjit Singh's kingdom may be estimated roughly at 20 millions. The Sikhs constituted one-tenth of the total. Of the remaining nine-tenths half were Muhammadans and the rest Hindus; the latter were more numerous in the south and north, and the former on the north-west and west. According to some historians the Sikhs, who were the heart and soul of the military nation, occupied a privileged position: they enjoyed a light assessment; no local officer dared to oppress a member of the Khalsa; and they were given readier access to lucrative posts, especially in the army, the best paid department. It cannot be ascertained how far the concessions were due to the Maharaja being a member of the same persuasion. But other causes are obvious. The

Privileges of the Sikhs, as a ruling race. General toleration.

Sikhs were turbulent and martial; and the Maharaja desired to found a kingdom, or in other words, his object was military; and in realising his object he had primarily to rely on the Sikhs as soldiers. Expediency and necessity required that he should humour them and keep them attached to him. Their religious fervour was the surest bulwark against any Afghan invasion of the Punjab and against any resurrection of Muhammadan power. Ranjit Singh, however, was no religious bigot. He did not persecute the Muhammadans. The only restraint on their freedom of worship was the prohibition of the call to prayer of the *muezzin*. Yet this prohibition was not begun by the Maharaja; it had been done in the days of the misls; and Ranjit Singh merely continued it.

Coins of Ranjit Singh. The coins of Ranjit Singh are of no special interest to the numismatist. He first struck rupees in the year after the capture of Lahore. These were close imitations of the Govind Shahi coins struck by the Sikhs when they first occupied Lahore in 1764. As noted at the end of the first chapter, the obverse side of these coins bore the inscription: "Grace, Power and Victory (victory without pause), Guru Govind Singh obtained from Nanak"; and on the reverse side were the date and the place of coining. The coins of the years 1803-04 contained a new sign on the reverse—an anchor. The rupees of the succeeding six or seven years (called Moran Shahi coins) bore the sign of a peacock's tail. These show the influence of the courtesan, Moran (*mor*=peacock), on the Maharaja. Coins minted during 1827-37 bore the same date, 1884 Sambat, *i.e.*, 1827. The Maharaja acted under the belief that by keeping the same date on the coins or in other words by stopping the progress of time, he would be able to lengthen his life.

So far about the silver rupees which weighed 177 grains. The gold coins weighing 167 grains were usually minted at

Lahore and contained the inscription on the reverse—*Wah Guruji*, thrice repeated. There were copper coins as well. Mints were established at Lahore, Amritsar, Multan and Kashmir. There also exists a rupee struck at Peshawar; according to Dr. Chopra it was struck by Hari Singh Nalwa in 1837. Some copper coins, dated 1839, give Derajat as the place where these were minted.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARMY.

Why and when Ranjit Singh organised the Army. Ranjit Singh from the beginning of his career aimed at seizing the dominions of all within his reach and levelling down the chiefs to the position of vassals under his authority; and he worked steadily and successfully for the goal. For this supreme object of his life a strong army was a clear necessity. Moreover, his genius lay not in evolving a constitution but in organising an army for which his subjects supplied excellent material ready to hand. Thus his personal ambitions and inclinations and the peculiar aptitudes of his people all alike concurred in the creation of a military force and fixed the character of his rule. The circumstances in which he was placed tended also in the same direction. Surrounded by powerful neighbours, the Afghans on one side and the English on the other, he perceived the need of a disciplined and well-equipped army as a measure of defence and even self-preservation; and the urgency of the need was forced on him by subsequent events such as those of 1805 and 1809.

The military organisation of the Punjab under the misaldars and the total strength of the army have been discussed in the first chapter. The Shukarchakia levy was a small one; and Ranjit Singh in his early life was helped a great deal by the alliance with the Kanhayas and other misls. According to Malcolm's estimate his troops by 1805 numbered about 8,000, including the feudal levies of the subdued chiefs. In that year Holkar appeared at Amritsar invoking his assistance against the British; and Ranjit Singh is said to have gone in

disguise to see the order of Lord Lake's army. He observed the drill of the Company's troops and realised the importance of discipline. By 1807 he raised three trained battalions. Then occurred the events of 1809. The repulse of the Akalis by Metcalfe's escort impressed on him the value of discipline. The military display of the British which wrung from him the Treaty of Amritsar taught him the need of a large trained army in order to ensure territorial safety, to inspire wholesome fear and to win diplomatic triumphs. Thus in 1805 the idea grew of possessing a regular and well-organised army; and it was driven home to him by the events of 1809.

The Army : its parts. The Army of Ranjit Singh may be divided into two broad classes—the *Fouj-i-Ain*, the Regular Army; and the *Fouj-i-beqawaid* or the Irregular Force. A section of the former was called *Fouj-i-khas* or the French Legion.

A. The Fouj-i-Ain was also called *Fouj-i-qawaidan* or *Campu Mualla* (the Exalted Camp). It contained the three usual arms—Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery. As the formation of the regular army was a gradual process, the strength and organisation varied at different dates. Important details concerning each of the three arms are given below.

(*a*) *Infantry.* Footservice was in the beginning not popular with the Sikhs who by tradition were horsemen. Ranjit Singh was bent on having a disciplined infantry in close imitation of the English mode. He began soon after 1805 not with the Sikhs but chiefly with the Gurkhas, Afghans and Purbia Hindustanis. Good pay and the Maharaja's personal preference gradually overcame the Sikh aversion to footservice. In 1812 Sir David Ochterlony saw two regiments of Sikhs besides Hindustanis drilled by men who had resigned

or deserted the British service. The success with which the Gurkhas resisted for long (1814-16) the British arms gave Ranjit Singh confidence in the mettle of the properly trained Indian soldiers. By 1818 the Sikhs began to dominate in the infantry as well. The Maharaja took Europeans into service from 1822 who trained the army into a formidable fighting force.

Organisation of the Infantry.

The Infantry was divided into battalions each under a Commandant. The number in each battalion differed at different dates: in 1819 each contained 400 to 600; in 1829, 700 to 800 men; and at the end of the reign the number was not less than 800 in each battalion. As the number increased it came to be sub-divided into Companies of 100 men each; a Company again contained four equal parts. A Company was under a Subedar and each of its sections of 25 soldiers under a Havildar. The Infantry in course of time became the best part of the Sikh Army. It need hardly be pointed out that besides the soldiers in the army there were non-combatants, as for instance, clerks, priests, standard-bearers and grooms.

Organisation of the Cavalry. Allard.

(*b*) *Cavalry*. The great need for the Sikh horsemen was discipline which Ranjit Singh sought to introduce from the beginning. But partly on account of their aversion to drill and fixed rules and partly because of the greater attention paid to the infantry, the regular cavalry remained a very unimportant branch till the appointment of Allard in 1822. In that year there were four trained regiments as against 14 regiments of infantry. Allard entrusted with the task of raising a corps of dragoons, succeeded so far that in 1829 the regular force came to about 4,500 men, *i.e.*, four times the number of 1822. A regiment of cavalry contained from 250 to 600 men. But the regular cavalry did not impress the foreigners. The Maharaja was

indifferent to this branch partly because of personal interest in the infantry and artillery, partly because of the existence of a separate irregular cavalry (*Ghorcharas*) and partly because of expense. We may quote the opinion of Steinbach which is confirmed by what Osborne (Military Secretary to Lord Auckland) says in the *Camp and Court of Ranjit Singh*: "The Cavalry of the Sikh army is very inferior in every respect to the Infantry. While the latter are carefully picked from large bodies of candidates for service, the former are composed of men of all sorts and sizes and ages, who get appointed solely through the interest of the different sirdars. They are mean-looking, ill-dressed, and wretchedly-mounted. Their horse trappings are of leather of the worst quality, and their saddles of the same miserable material and badly constructed. When the horse is in motion, the legs and arms of the rider move backwards and forwards, right and left, by way, as it were, of keeping time with the pace of the animal bestridden. The horses are small, meagre, and ill-shaped, with the aquiline nose which so peculiarly proclaims inferiority of breed. They are totally deficient of firmness in the hour of struggle, and only charge the foe when a vast superiority of numerical force gives them a warranty of success." While what Steinbach says is mostly true, at some places he seems to be confusing the regular with the irregular cavalry.

Remarks on the Cavalry.

(c) *Artillery.* Ranjit Singh recognised early in life the importance of the two arms, infantry and artillery. Though the aversion of the Sikhs to the latter branch was not so great, yet it was sufficient to impede the progress of the Maharaja's scheme in this direction. The slow progress might partly be ascribed to the dearth of shot and shell. In 1810 a corps of artillery was raised and placed under a separate officer called *Darogha-i Topkhana*. The next artillery raised was in 1814. The former was under Muhammed Ghaus Khan and the latter

under Ilahi Baksh, the best artillery officer in the Sikh army.

Artillery Officers: Ilahi Bakhsh, Court and Gardner.

The organisation of the artillery on European lines was completed by Court and Gardner, the former of whom entered service in 1827 and the latter in 1832. This army was classified into heavy siege trains, field batteries drawn by horses and bullocks, and swivel batteries mostly mounted on camels. The first formed a distinct corps of artillery, while the latter two were distributed with ordnance throughout the regular army. The distribution was effected from 1833 when the whole regular army was reconstituted into brigades each of which contained usually four battalions of infantry, a small force of cavalry of varying strength and a battery of from eight to ten guns. The officers of the battalions were sardars. It was a practice with the Maharaja to take the promising sons of sardars and train them for military service.

The *Fouj-i-Khas* or special brigade was a section of the regular army, and was also called the French Legion. It was organised by Ventura and Allard. It was the first in rank, discipline and equipment in the Sikh army. Its normal strength was four infantry battalions, two regiments of cavalry and a park of artillery of twenty-four guns. In command of this force Ventura served in many campaigns with distinction, chiefly in the hills and around Peshawar.

Composition of the French Legion.

The infantry force included the Khas battalion of 800 strong; a Gurkha battalion, strength 700 or so; Deva Singh's battalion, 800 men or so; and Sham Sota battalion of nearly the same strength. The cavalry force was composed of a grenadier and a dragoon regiment both of nearly the same strength, 750 men, and a troop of life-guards of about 200 men. The artillery of the French Legion was the Ilahi Bakhsh corps mentioned above. The expenses of the Legion amounted to something like $11\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of rupees a year. Cap-

tain Wade saw the parade of the Khas Infantry in 1827 and bore testimony to the high perfection to which Ventura had brought the Legion.

B. Fouj-i-beqawaid. The irregular army, for the most part cavalry, was composed of *Ghorchara Khas* and the misaldari contingent. The former was recruited from the well-to-do country gentlemen, the sons and relations of the sardars of the Court; they were paid at first in *jagirs*, later in cash. The other section was supplied by the petty chiefs who were once independent but were now reduced to vassalage by the Maharaja. The Ghorcharas were divided into *Deras* and each *Dera* into *misls* of from twenty-five to seventy-five men. Of the two sections, the *Ghorchara Khas* was superior in status and equipment. Though the Maharaja was very proud of them, the irregulars did not attain any high level of efficiency. They were not subjected to any regular drill and discipline. They were variously but gorgeously dressed; and all Europeans (*e.g.*, Huegel, the Prussian traveller, Wade, Osborne and Auckland) who saw the *Ghorcharas* in review speak of the splendid and picturesque, though motley, appearance they presented.

Composition of the Irregulars.

The Akalis. Little need be said about the Akalis who, as a distinct class of Sikhs, may be dated from the time of Guru Gobind Singh. By the time of Ranjit Singh they grew to be a terror to the people. As men they were noted for their ferocity and fanaticism and for their contempt for death and danger. They were marked out from other Sikhs by the peculiarity of their dress, blue tunic and turban to which were fastened three or four steel quoits. They formed the only infantry worth naming before the days of Ranjit Singh. As soldiers they were known for their mad valour which recked of no consequences. Ranjit Singh tried to form them into a body of irregular cavalry, two to three thousand strong, but only partially succeeded in his

object. He was afraid of interfering too much with them; and they showed an utter disregard for all discipline and fought as they chose, usually dismounting and rushing furiously, sword in hand, upon the enemy. Of the Akalis Phula Singh and Sadhu Singh may be mentioned. In some of the battles which Ranjit Singh fought with the Afghans and other foes, the tide of victory (as at Theri, Nowshera) was turned in his favour by the daring and impetuous onslaughts of these desperate spirits.

An Estimate of the Army. The total strength of the Sikh army cannot exactly be ascertained because it was always varying, usually increasing. Various estimates have been furnished by men who are equally worthy of credence—Burnes, Murray, Masson and even Lord Auckland. According to the Governor-General the regular and irregular cavalry came to 30,000 men (1838); Burnes fixed (1831) the total at 75,000 men including 25,000 regular infantry. The *Fouj-i-Ain* at the end of the reign may be said to have been somewhere between 35 to 40 thousands; the irregulars were nearly the same in number. Burnes' total may be accepted.

Ranjit Singh was fond of showing his army to the European visitors. Men like Sir Henry Fane (Commander-in-Chief) and Lord Auckland have praised the equipment, discipline, steadiness and precision of manœuvres of the army, particularly of the infantry. Ranjit Singh's aim was to organise the infantry and the artillery. He succeeded. The infantry became a formidable disciplined force, though rather slow in manœuvering, and hence likely to be successfully charged by the enemy during a change of position.

Pay, Equipment and Characteristics. It was with some difficulty that Ranjit Singh succeeded in substituting cash payment for the old practice of a share in the plunder or of grants of land. A foot soldier got Rs. 10 per mensem and a member of the cavalry Rs. 25; but the latter had to procure

his own horse and accoutrement. This is what we read in Steinbach. No general statement can be made regarding pay which differed in different grades and in different units. But it can safely be said that the cavalry was better paid than the infantry ; and the artillery and the infantry received the same pay. There were no pensions or provisions for the families of soldiers who died in harness.

The cavalry was armed with swords, spears and match-lock, while the principal weapon of the infantry was the musket. But the muskets were of very inferior stamp, incapable of throwing the ball to a great distance, and on quick and repeated discharges were liable to burst.

Steinbach mentions two qualities of the Sikh soldier: (*a*) his faculty of subsisting on a very small quantity of food, and (*b*) his capacity to endure great fatigue. He says that on one occasion the distance from Lahore to Peshawar (some 300 miles) was covered in 11 days. Hence he calls the Sikh soldiers 'iron-legged.'

Enlistment in the army was voluntary, but there was no difficulty in obtaining recruits. The service was exceedingly popular. The soldiery were apt in acquiring a knowledge of their military duties. But they were a bit averse to control.

Europeans in Sikh Service. Steinbach says that there were a dozen Europeans in the service of Ranjit Singh. The number was certainly far more. Dr. Chopra has given a list of fifty-four Europeans of all nationalities. It is said that the total was somewhere near seventy. Some account of the prominent Europeans will be found in the last chapter. We read that none of them was entrusted with supreme command in expeditions which was nominally given to one of the princes Kharak Singh or Sher Singh or to one of the chief sardars.

In consequence of the victories of the English in India Ranjit Singh was impressed with the need of discipline. The European officers were employed to introduce drill and discipline in the Sikh army. But their services must not be over-estimated. The Sikhs were famous for their ardent courage and long endurance of fatigue. The European officers, having excellent material to work with, made good use of their means and opportunities. "They gave a moderate degree of precision and completeness to a system already introduced....Neither did Generals Ventura and Allard, Court and Avitabile, ever assume to themselves the merit of having created the Sikh army, and perhaps their ability and independence of character added more to the general belief in European superiority, than all their instructions to the real efficiency of the Sikhs as soldiers." [Cunningham, p. 174.]

What the European Officers really did for the Sikh army.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAHARAJA

Personal Appearance. Captain Wade who saw the Maharaja in August, 1827 describes him thus: "Ranjit Singh is diminutive in stature and of a very weak and emaciated constitution. His face is disfigured strongly by the small-pox and from the effects of that malady he has lost his left eye. He wears a very long and scanty beard which has now become nearly white." But, according to Prinsep, his appearance was far from being unprepossessing, for his countenance was full of expression and animation. "His large brown, unsteady and suspicious eye," says Huegel, "seems diving into the thoughts of the person with whom he converses, and his straightforward questions are put incessantly and in the most laconic terms."

Character of the Maharaja. By all accounts Ranjit Singh was simple in his habits. The simplicity of his dress was in perfect contrast with the gorgeousness of the Court and of his well-clad sardars. It is said that he never used a throne. He sat on a golden chair, nothing resembling a regular throne.

Formal illiteracy.

Ranjit Singh, like Akbar and Hyder Ali, did not learn to read and write. It is wrong to think that no arrangement was made for his education in his early life. We read that Bhai Phagu Singh Dharamsalia and Daula Singh were appointed tutors. But the circumstances of his early life did not favour any adequate upbringing. Moreover, he personally preferred military exercises and field sports to indoor study and literary

pursuits. But as in the case of Akbar, his wonderful memory, penetrating acumen, and unquenchable curiosity made up for his formal illiteracy.

Ranjit Singh did not rise above the vices of the society in which he lived—fraud, rapacity and licentiousness. Neither did the family milieu conduce to any moral elevation of character. He was "shamelessly and openly drunken and debauched: and his moral being seemed as dwarfed and distorted as its physical envelope." He occasionally outraged decency by appearing in public inebriated and surrounded by courtesans, among whom was Moran. He had a large number of dancing girls who used to be attired in military costumes with bows and arrows, spears and shields. When thus equipped, he used to style them his body-guard and to say that they formed a part of the army which was least amenable to discipline

Moral character.

Some historians hold that he merely conformed to the theories and practices of Sikhism because he thereby struck a note to which the heart of the Sikh people vibrated. They say that the Sikh doctrines and observances were agreeable to him in so far as they helped him to rivet his authority more closely on the rude Jats he ruled. No good reason exists for doubting the sincerity of his attachment to the religion of his forefathers. He followed the cult according to his lights. For a certain number of hours every day the *Granth Sahib* was read out to him; he bestowed gifts, on necessary occasions, on Sikh temples and priests; Babas and Bhais found an hohourable place at this Court; and he spent a portion of each year at Amritsar, attending the Durbar Sahib with due reverence. When his infatuation for Moran excited the wrath of the priests of the Golden Temple and his offerings to the Temple were refused, he sent away the courtesan to

Ranjit Singh as a Sikh.

Pathankot and purchased their forgiveness by a propitiatory fine of Rs. 5,000. He always regarded himself as an humble servant of the Khalsa; and on his Seal were inscribed the words *Akal Sahai, i.e.,* God the helper. But with his religious ideas was mixed a large element of superstition. In crises he consulted astrologers and cast lots upon the *Granth Sahib.* For example, the latter method was followed to decide whether help was to be given to Yaswantrao Holkar or not. The Maharaja described it thus to Capt. Wade in 1827: "I took two slips of paper; and writing on one the propositions of Holkar and on the other whether I should preserve peace with the British, I put them into the leaves of the Granth and desired a boy of innocent years to bring one of the papers to me. He brought that on which the last was written and I acted accordingly."

Religious toleration.

Though a Sikh and the Sikhs were the favoured of the State, yet Ranjit Singh was no religious bigot. As the political head of the Punjab he aimed at reconciling the varied divisions of race and creed among his subjects by employing all, according to their aptitudes, in his service. The Brahmans, the Khatris, the Dogra Rajputs and the Muhammadans were all employed at court, though his religious tolerance was not agreeable to the orthodox school of Sikhs. It may be mentioned that in the closing years of his life the Brahmans gained such an ascendancy over him that he was induced to secure salvation by giving away to pious Brahmans some personal valuables and even to will away the Kohinoor to Jagannath (the famous idol of Orissa) which, however, was not carried out on the ground that it was State property and that its possession was associated with the independence of the Sikh kingdom.

All historians concur in saying that Ranjit Singh was false. selfish and avaricious. His conduct and career as described in the first two chapters of this book, substantiate the statement.

He plundered and reduced to misery without the slightest feeling of remorse, widows, orphans and families possessing claims to consideration and respect. "In his youth," writes Prinsep, "he was lavish in his gifts to favourites, and there was liberality in his general dealings, but, as age has come over him, avarice and the desire of hoarding have become the ruling passions."

Avarice and unscrupulousness.

As to gifts the Maharaja continued throughout his life to bestow gifts on men and on corporate bodies. We have it on the authority of Colonel Lawrence that he used to spend twelve lakhs of rupees every year in charity. Lavishness on ceremonial occasions, public or private, was never grudged by him. On the other hand it cannot be denied that he was false, selfish and greedy. The treatment accorded to Sada Kaur (*ante*, p. 13), to the sons of Jodh Singh Ramgarhia (*ante*, p. 12), to Fateh Singh Ahluwalia (p. 14) and to the sons of Hari Singh Nalwa bears out the truth of the remark. A few words of justification may be said about the last instance. Hari Singh's military services to the Maharaja were undoubtedly great. On his death the size of the estates to each of his four sons was considerably reduced. The fact is that out of political motive, the Maharaja was opposed to hereditary wealth and honour and to the growth of powerful vested interests. The sons of grandees had to begin life anew ; favours were personal and according to merit shown. Confiscation of the estates of deceased nobles was the practice of the land—a practice initiated by the Mughals and pursued by them with undeviating severity.

Two more instances of his greed and unscrupulousness may be cited. It has already been noted (p. 17) that Mohkam after his futile Kashmir expedition (1813) brought Shah Shuja with him to Lahore. He and his family were given asylum at Lahore and provided with a suitable house. But soon after

Ranjit Singh demanded of the Shah the surrender of the famous diamond, Kohinoor.* Wafa Begum (Shuja's wife) is said to have promised the diamond to the Maharaja on condition he protected her husband against Fateh Khan. This version was, however, afterwards contradicted by Shuja. Ranjit Singh offered a jagir in exchange for the Kohinoor. When all persuasion failed the Maharaja placed a guard of soldiers round the Afghan's house lest the diamond might be sent away. Letters were produced (supposed by some to be forged) showing the complicity of Shuja in anti-Sikh intrigues with his Afghan friends. After resisting the demand for two months during which the *ex*-King was kept half-starving and threatened with imprisonment, the diamond was at last surrendered personally to the Maharaja who on his part swore in the most solemn manner to befriend the exile and to endeavour to restore him to the throne of Kabul. Supposing the letters to have been real, the Maharaja even then violated the oriental duty of hospitality in extorting the jewel, however much he might have considered its possession valuable.

The story of the Kohinoor and Laili.

The other story is that of the possession of Laili. The mare was demanded of Yar Muhammad Khan of Peshawar (1826). He said that the mare was dead. The troubles arising out of the presence of Syed Ahmad Ghazi delayed the acquisition. After the death of Yar Muhammad (p. 24), Sultan Muhammad handed her over when threatened with imprisonment by Ventura. The Maharaja's love for horses was admittedly great. He offered a high price for the mare. But even then he was not justified in coveting the belongings of others.

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* Cap. Wade who saw the diamond (1827) described it thus : " It is about the size and shape of a small hen's egg. Its weight is said to be 3½ rupees. It is set as an armlet with a very large diamond on each side of it. Every one was surprised by its size and brilliancy. The Raja puts great value on the possession of it and keeps it lodged in the fort of Govindgarh (Amritsar) of which Imam-ud-din is the Governor."

In spite of all his greed and rapacity, Ranjit Singh's career was free from cruelty and blood-thirstiness. No doubt he conquered without the slightest feeling of right. But we hear of no after-massacres, of no sky-high pyramids of human heads. 'He ruled with a rod of iron, but his reign was free from any striking acts of cruelty and oppression than those of many more civilized monarchs. His career was stained by no bloody executions and by much fewer crimes, than are chargeable against most founders of dynasties.'* He was generous to the vanquished, provided of course they submitted to his rule. Out of policy he seldom drove any one to desperation. Neither by nature was he wantonly cruel. Neither was there any sentimental manifestation in his politics. His rule he wanted to extend and assert: and in the process he would not allow to remain any remnants of power hostile enough to furnish elements of revival.

General leniency and generosity.

The perspicacity of Ranjit Singh displayed in his appreciation of character and in tracing the motives of other's actions, gave him a command and influence over all who came in contact with him. These were mainly instrumental to his rapid rise. The same traits of his character accounted for the happy choice of subordinates and the perfect control he maintained over them. In that age of corruption and violence he was wonderfully well served by his officers. He too recognised the advantages of generosity in rewarding good service. But in this respect his selfishness sometimes asserted itself. He seems sometimes to have cared nothing for men whose work was done or who became obnoxious to a new favourite. Dewan Mohkam Chand's military ability was to a large measure instrumental in making the Maha-

Wise selection of officers.

* The words of Lord Lawrence, Osborne and Prinsep are here pieced together. (See Dr. Chopra's *The Punjab as a Sovereign State*, p. 222, *footnote*, Prinsep, p. 187.)

raja sole master of the Punjab. But this did not save his son Moti Ram or his grandson Kirpa Ram from constant slights and eventual ruin. And this was because the latter incurred the enmity of the Maharaja's new favourite, Raja Dhyan Singh.

Inquisitiveness of Ranjit Singh.

Every foreign visitor to the Lahore Court was struck by the Maharaja's intelligent and eager curiosity and general information. He never let slip an opportunity of enlarging the sphere of his knowledge. There was nothing of which he was fonder to discuss than the manners and constitutions of other countries and to hear about the armies and campaigns of Europe ; and his manners to strangers were extremely pleasing and courteous. Victor Jacquemont (Travelling Naturalist to the Royal Museum of Natural History of Paris) who came to the Punjab in March, 1831, writes thus : "His conversation is like a nightmare. He is almost the first inquisitive Indian I have met with, and his curiosity balances the apathy of his nation. He has asked me a hundred thousand questions about India, the British, Europe, Bonaparte, the world in general and the next, hell, paradise, the soul, God, the devil and a myriad others of the same kind." Of others, he enquired about Christianity and parliamentary institutions. Dr. Murray was sent to him in 1826 and of him he asked details of the Burmese war and of the cause of the Sepoy Mutiny at Barrackpur of 1824. Of Sir Henry Fane he enquired the qualification of a good soldier. Fane in his reply insisted on perfect obedience.

Ranjit Singh and other conquerors.

Historians have compared Ranjit Singh with Peter the Great of Russia, Napoleon Bonaparte and Oliver Cromwell. The Maharaja evinced, especially in the formation of his military force, the same enquiring activity, the same attention to minutiæ and perseverance in watching the execution of his plans

as the first Peter of Russia. Jacquemont calls him a Bonaparte in miniature; and he resembled the French Emperor alike in the suddenness of his rise and in the brilliancy of his achievements. But there the comparison ends. Unlike Cromwell and Napoleon, he was lacking in education and in the support of his people whom he meant to keep down by the superiority of his military strength.

Success as a ruler; qualities for the same.

Burnes writes of Ranjit Singh thus: "I never quitted the presence of a native of India with such impressions as I left the presence of this man. Without education, without a guide he conducts all affairs of his kingdom with surprising energy and vigour, and yet he wields his power with a consideration quite unprecedented in an Indian prince." Whatever be the points of similarity and difference between him and other conquerors of History, he was, by a consensus of opinion, a success as a ruler. He was a born ruler with the natural genius of command. Whatever might have been the defects of his moral character or of his physical appearance and however inadequate his formal education, he possessed personal magnetism and discriminating judgment and was assiduous in his attention to the business of the State. His fertility in expedients was wonderful, and he was never at a loss for a resource in the greatest embarrassments. Many of his actions evinced caprice and even instability of purpose, because the motive of them could not be guessed or imagined. Political sagacity was another trait which made for the success

Political sagacity.

of his career. This was convincingly shown in his surrender to British demands in 1809 and in 1836, and in his persistence, in spite of the insistent advice of the sardars to the contrary, in the friendship with the British. He always knew how far he could go and when to yield, when and how to execute or counteract his plans.

However large and far-reaching his ultimate designs, his immediate measures were always practicable. The progress of his arms was steady and stubborn ; but each step was part of a comprehensive scheme, and he made each step secure before he took the next ; he never challenged an enemy till he felt the chances of a contest would be in his favour. He was equally steady and consistent in the pursuit of his aggressive schemes and in the observance of diplomatic friendship. Continuity was the essence of his policy.

Achievements of Ranjit Singh. Cunningham writes : "Ranjit Singh found the Punjab a waning confederacy, a prey to the factions of its chiefs, pressed by the Afghans and the Marathas and ready to submit to English supremacy. He consolidated the numerous petty states into a kingdom, he wrested from Kabul the fairest of its provinces, and he gave the potent English no cause for interference." Thus the supreme need forced on him by the condition of the time was an organised army under a controlling head ; and his talents were directed to developing the Khalsa into the most efficient fighting machine. It has been said that the most determined and successful opponents of the British were those who, like Hyder Ali and Yaswant Rao Holkar, made no attempt to adopt alien methods of fighting but stuck to their native habits of guerilla warfare. But the unequalled stubbornness and discipline which the Sikhs displayed at Ferozshah and Sobraon disprove the belief. The result was largely due to the methods introduced by Ranjit Singh who discovered the secrets of British invincibility in their use of the artillery and their employment of a large mass of disciplined infantry. And he had excellent material to work with. The Sikhs possessed hardihood of character, ardent courage and a spirit of adaptation ; they were animated by a feeling of common

How Ranjit Singh faced the situation at the time of his rise to power.

interest and destiny implanted in them by the Gurus. But they were at the same time turbulent; and the Sikh doctrines of brotherhood and equality made them to a certain extent kick at the idea of subordination. But he established a system of government in which much scope was given to individual ambition which maintained the independence of their character; and work was always appreciated and rewarded. He never flagrantly arrogated to himself the title or powers of a tyrant.

An appreciation of Ranjit Singh's work.

Whatever was done was done in the name of the Lord and for the advantage of the Khalsa. But this was not all. The Maharaja possessed the personality of inspiring enthusiasm in his subjects. Having a long old head on young shoulders he seized the opportunity, made good use of the material, founded a military monarchy on the fruit of the labours of Guru Govind Singh and Banda and gave coherence and strength to the whole Sikh nation. He undoubtedly saved the Sikhs from anarchy, disintegration and sinking into insignificance by his masterly action in binding them together at a time when persecution and common danger having disappeared the confederacies were, like a loosely-tied bundle of faggots, inimical to one another and intent on personal aggrandisement. The misls had done their work and union was absolutely necessary to preserve their strength. And this was what Ranjit Singh did.

Ranjit Singh raised a formidable disciplined force. In view of what we said about the characteristics of the Sikhs it was necessary to keep the army employed and under control. But when a limit was set to Sikh dominion and particularly when death removed the commanding genius, there remained no one to fill his place with equal energy and hold upon the affections of the people and then the vital spirit of the race began to consume itself in domestic contentions.

Three elements. Ranjit Singh's responsibility for the ultimate overthrow of the Sikh Power.

The army of Ranjit Singh thus proved to be a contributory cause of the downfall of the Sikhs. For two other reasons the Maharaja has been held responsible for the ultimate decline of the Sikh Power. One was, that he centred the whole power and authority in himself; and so when he died he did not leave behind any permanent institution which could live apart from himself. Secondly, he brought into being a Court with diverse elements and conflicting interests; and this proved to be, like the army, another element of potential disorder and eventual ruin. It is not easy to see how he could be blamed for the first: an organised army was the necessity of the time and without it he could not have achieved his purpose. As to the personal rule it should be marked that there was no other alternative; that type of government could alone establish peace and order; moreover military depotism was the natural and inevitable result of the disorder which preceded his rise. He has been blamed for discontinuing the *Gurumatta*. It is doubtful if that institution was very much of an effective instrument for the peaceful and continuous governance of the whole province. Coming to the last point, *scil.*, Court, we find that Ranjit Singh, contrary to his general levelling principle, created powerful antagonistic interests, particularly the two groups, the Jammu brothers and the Sindhanwalias, the former being by far the more formidable at the time. The fact stands that the Maharaja did raise the Dogra chiefs to vast power and influence. It is almost certain that the absence of such a Court would not have averted the overthrow of the Sikh Power. Ranjit Singh by his tact and vigour merely stemmed the tide that was coming from towards the east of his dominion. He recognised the impossibility of raising a permanent barrier against the rising tide. He knew and said that all would be red some day.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COURT OF RANJIT SINGH.

The Court. Though the Maharaja was personally free from pomp and show, yet his Court was brilliant with oriental pageantry. Apart from the decorations of the place where the Durbar was held, the sardars were gorgeously clad with elegant dresses and costly jewels. "They had a splendid appearance and it was impossible not to admire the order and regularity of the whole assembly, the deference with which the sardars treated the Maharaja and the courtesy they observed towards each other. There was no rude familiarity and confusion, every one seemed to know his place and to be conscious of the station he filled."* But it is not the object of this chapter to describe the Court but to give an account of the courtiers.

The Court was one of the two forces (the other being the Army) which Ranjit Singh's weak successors were unable to manage. The Maharaja in taking men into his service, did not bother himself about their antecedents or their religion. Merit and fidelity were the tests. The result was that the Court came to be composed of men of ability and of diverse elements and communities.

Unfortunately merit was not always kept in view in the matter of appointment and continuance of royal favour. "Like all despots and solitary authorities, Ranjit Singh laid himself open to the charge of extravagant partiality and favouritism. He had placed himself in some degree in opposition to the Sikh people; the free followers of Govind Singh could not be the observant slaves of an equal member of the Khalsa, and he

*Captain Wade to Sir Charles Metcalfe, August 1, 1827.

sought for strangers whose applause would be more ready, if less sincere, and in whom he could repose some confidence as the creatures of his favour."

The Princes. It would not be out of place to include the Princes in this chapter; and description of the men of the Court may conveniently begin with them. Kharak Singh was the only legitimate son of the Maharaja. He was born in 1802 of Raj Kaur, the Nakai lady. During the reign he did not occupy a prominent position such as belongs to an heir-apparent. This was due to the intrigues of Dhyan Singh who often managed to keep the prince away from the Court on some pretext. Kharak Singh was weak, indolent and unambitious and was religiously and peacefully inclined. Yet when roused to energy he showed no small measure of personal bravery and determination. At the time of death the Maharaja entrusted him to Dhyan Singh and enjoined the latter to act towards the successor the part of a good, loyal and faithful minister and servant. But as later history tells us, Kharak Singh was poisoned by the Jammu Rajas (1840). Nao Nihal Singh was the son of Kharak Singh and was born in 1821. He would have proved an able and vigorous ruler like his grandfather. But his promising career was cut short by an accident while he was returning from his father's funeral (November 5, 1840). Sher Singh, the supposititious son of Mehtab Kaur (*ante*, p. 14) was handsome and brave but stupid. He was on more than one occasion employed on the frontier and was reputed to be a good general. But his reputation was but a pale reflection from Ventura's, for the latter was always associated with him in command and was the real general. Sher Singh succeeded Nao Nihal Singh and was assassinated in September, 1843.

Kharak Singh, Nao Nihal Singh and Sher Singh.

Dhyan Singh was placed in charge of the Deorhi about 1823, and was virtually the Prime Minister. He was the chan-

nel of conveying the petitions and representations of the people and carrying the Maharaja's orders regarding them into effect.

Dhyan Singh; his influence.

Shahamat Ali writes: "The Maharaja places great confidence in the Raja's good sense and fidelity, and considers him as one of his sincerest friends. He entrusts him with the investigation and settlement of affairs of importance both in the financial and judicial departments of the State; and the mildness and propriety of conduct with which he transacts his business is not among the least of his good qualities and claims to approbation. The power which the two elder Jammu Rajas have of late been acquiring is chiefly owing to the great influence which the constant presence of Raja Dhyan Singh at Court enables him to exercise in the affairs of their family." Moreover, the Raja had full access to the zenana where his son, Hira Singh, may be said to have been a continual resident. Thus they were privy to everything that happened in and out of Court; nor could anything be done even in the most secret recesses of the King's private chamber without their knowledge. So things went on working in favour of the Dogra party. Their position roused the enmity of others; and their sworn enemy were the Sindhanwalia sardars. Dhyan Singh was murdered by them in September, 1843.

Dhyan Singh was undoubtedly clever, brave and energetic. He was inordinately ambitious. For the satisfaction of his thirst for aggrandisement, for the realization of his ambition, he considered no means as too low, no sacrifice as too heavy. He served Ranjit Singh loyally; and it was after the Maharaja's death that the minister subordinated his sense of public duty to personal ambition. Osborne writes of him thus: "Dhyan Singh presents a singular instance of a favourite and of a man in power whose talents and virtues are more appreciated than his power and influence are envied. Gentlemanlike, manly and unassuming in his manners, he is still cold and repulsive to

Europeans, whom he both fears and hates with more than common rancour and against whom he loses no opportunity of exerting his influence with the Maharaja." The anti-British feeling Dhyan Singh shared with his master. But whereas the former urged speedy action, the latter preferred to wait and make preparations against the inevitable contingency of a scuffle with the British.

Hira Singh.

Hira Singh played no important part in the history of Ranjit Singh's reign except as an instrument of his father. The most noteworthy thing was the infatuation of the Maharaja for him. His seat was on a chair on the right side of the Maharaja. 'The King's mind was so worked on that he could neither sleep nor rest without having him at his side.' In the disorder following Ranjit Singh's death, Hira Singh, then Wazir of Dalip Singh, was murdered on December 21, 1844.

Suchet Singh.

Suchet Singh was inferior in ability to his elder brothers. He held command of a large force of Ghorcharas. During Ranjit Singh's reign he 'fluttered as a gay courtier and gallant soldier, without grasping at power or creating enemies.' Later on he competed with Hira Singh for the Wazirate; and in consequence he lost his life in a fight (March, 1844).

Hindus. The most prominent group at a later stage of the reign was the Dogra Rajputs, the three brothers Gulab Singh, Dhyan Singh and Suchet Singh, and the son of the second, Hira Singh. Before their rise, many Hindus had made their mark in the service of the Maharaja. But Dhyan Singh and Hira Singh attained a unique position at the Court.

The two elder brothers, Gulab Singh and Dhyan Singh, were introduced into Ranjit Singh's Court by Misar Dewan

Chand in 1811. Next year they were made Ghorcharas receiving the pay of four and five rupees a day. In 1813, Suchet Singh was also taken into service at Court. Their handsome appearance, graceful bearing and superior ability ensured their rise. In 1818, the three brothers were created Rajas. The eldest became Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu, Dhyan Singh Raja of Bhimbar and Suchet Singh of Ramnagar. A little later Hira Singh was made Raja of Jasrota. To these titles were appended large territories.

Jammu Rajas.

Soon after the elevation to the rank of Raja, Gulab Singh departed from Lahore for Jammu, leaving his brothers still there in high favour and close intimacy with their royal master and well instructed as to the use they were to make of their opportunities for the aggrandisement of the family. His allegiance was limited to the maintenance of a small force of horse and fort at the service of the Darbar, to be presented annually at the Duserah festival for review at Lahore. Ordinarily he remained in the hills where he ruled with an iron rod and extended his authority over all the petty independent chiefs of the neighbouring states. By all accounts his rule in the hills was cruel and even barbarous. Reports of complaints were usually suppressed through the influence of Dhyan Singh at Court. But the vigilance of the brother did not always succeed. When summoned to Court for explanation Gulab Singh invariably propitiated and pleased the Maharaja by his utmost submission and humility. He has been called a clever diplomat. His cleverness is sufficiently evidenced by the fact of his survival through all the revolutions which followed the death of Ranjit Singh and to which his second brother succumbed. On account of his services in

Gulab Singh.

Character of Gulab Singh.

the first Sikh War he was granted Kashmir by the Governor-General. His character has been described thus: "Ambitious, avaricious, and cruel by nature, he reduced the exercise of his cruelty to a system for the promotion of the objects which his ambition and avarice led him to seek. With all this he was courteous and polite in demeanour, and exhibited a suavity of manner and language that contrasted fearfully with the real disposition to which it formed an artfully designed but still transparent covering..................He must be accounted the very best of soldiers, and, for an unlettered man, he is able, active, bold, energetic yet a wise and prudent commander. He looks more to the future, its wants and requisites, than either to the present or past—slowly goes on and feels his way as he goes, always ensuring supplies and resources."

Dewan Mohkam Chand.

Mohkam Chand, a Khatri, was taken into Sikh service in 1806 and remained one of Ranjit Singh's trusted generals till his death in 1814. During the period he was the virtual commander-in-chief of the Sikh army and was associated with the Maharaja in all his campaigns. In 1807 he came with the Maharaja to Patiala (*ante*, p. 33); he commanded the first expedition to Kashmir (p. 17); and in 1813 he took the fort of Attock. In 1812 he was created Dewan. For some time he was governor of Bist Jalandhar. He was a man of tried skill and valour and was entirely deserving of the confidence which the Maharaja reposed in him. In his private character the Dewan was liberal, upright and high-minded.

Dewan Moti Ram; his sons, Ram Dyal and Kirpa Ram.

Moti Ram, son of Mohkam Chand, was also made Dewan and allowed to enjoy the governorship of the Jalandhar Doab. On the conquest of Kashmir he was appointed governor of Kashmir (1819). Though removed towards the end of the year, he was restored to that post a year after. He remained the governor from 1820 to 1826. In 1820 he suffered a great bereavement in the death of his eldest

son Ram Dyal who was killed in Hazara of which he had been made governor in supersession of Hukma Singh Chimni. The son was a rising officer of great promise in the Sikh army. In April, 1825, the jagirs and possessions of Mohkam Chand which were being managed by Kirpa Ram, the younger son of Moti Ram, were sequestered on the score of mismanagement. Probably the real reason was the enmity of Dhyan Singh. Moti Ram was a member of the missions which were deputed to Lord Amherst in 1827 and to Lord William Bentinck in 1830. He was a man of considerable ability but was of mild and peaceable disposition. He retired to Benares in the later years of his life. His surviving son Kirpa Ram was governor of Kashmir till 1831 when he was recalled, due to the same sinister influence of Dhyan Singh. He then left the Punjab for Benares.

Khushal Singh.

Like Mohkam Chand, Khushal Singh was one of the earlier members of the Court. He was a Brahmin belonging to a village near Meerut. At the age of seventeen he came to Lahore to seek his fortune and was enlisted on Rs. 5 a month in the regiment commanded by Dhonkal Singh. Smart and handsome, he soon attracted the notice of the Maharaja. Soon he rose in favour and in 1811 superseded Basti Ram in the Deorhi. Jamadar Khushal Singh remained the Chamberlain for 12 years when Dhyan Singh superseded him. For some time he fell out of favour for the refusal of his brother, Ram Lal, to become a Sikh. He had received the Pahul, and his brother, Ram Singh, was also initiated soon after. Khushal Singh was employed in expeditions. In 1832 he was made governor of Kashmir. Dishonest and tyrannical, he was not a success anywhere. He was a favourite.

Tej Singh.

His nephew Tej Singh, a converted Sikh, was a man of military abilities. He had his military training under Misar Dewan Chand. Later on he played an important, though treacherous, part in the First Sikh War.

Dewan Chand.

Misar Dewan Chand was one of the greatest generals of Ranjit Singh. In the final expeditions against Multan and Kashmir he played a conspicuous part. In 1821 he took Mankera. He received the proud title of *Zafar Jung*. He died in 1825.

Bhawani Dass.

Dewan Bhawani Das has already been mentioned in connexion with the reorganisation of the Finance Department. He was a finance and revenue expert and was often deputed to newly conquered places for the revenue settlement. He was employed on military duties as well. He was at the head of the Finance Department till his death in 1834.

Ganga Ram and his son.

Dewan Ganga Ram was at the head of the Military Accounts Office. He organised the abkari system. He was known for his probity and administrative ability. His son was Dewan Ajudhia Parshad who was the paymaster of the *Fouji-i-Khas*. When later Ventura retired. he was placed in charge of the French Brigade. He was an eminently capable man on the military as well as civil side.

Raja Dina Nath.

Dina Nath was the nephew of Ganga Ram by whom he was appointed in 1815 and on whose death in 1826 he received the charge of the Royal Seal. On the death of Bhawani Das in 1834 he became the Finance Minister. In 1833 he was created a Dewan, and later on a Raja. He was a shrewd and sensible man, and possessed great statistical and financial information regarding every part of the Punjab. After the First Sikh War he was appointed to the Council of Regency of which he was a most able and useful member. "Without his clear head and business-like habits," writes Lepel Griffin, "it would have been almost impossible to disentangle the Durbar accounts, and after the annexation of the Punjab Dina Nath's aid in revenue

and jagir matters was almost as valuable as before." He has been styled the Talleyrand of the Punjab for surviving all the revolutions through which the Punjab passed after the death of Ranjit Singh. The fact of survival was a proof of his sagacity and farsightedness rather than of his lack of patriotism. "He was patriotic, but his love of country was subordinate to his love of self." He was on the whole a highly capable man, possessed of infinite capacity for work, of moral courage and personal bravery.

Other Hindus of note.

Other Hindus of importance at Lahore were Dewan Karam Chand whose name is associated with the drafting of the Anglo-Sikh Treaty of 1809. Misar Rallia Ram who was Chief of the Customs Department, the two brothers Beli Ram and Rup Lal, and Dewan Sawan Mal, Beli Ram was in charge of the regalia, treasury and robes. Important documents such as treaties with foreign states, were kept by him in the regalia. The Maharaja placed great confidence in him. His brother Rup Lal was well known for his equitable administration of the Jalandhar Doab of which he was the governor. Sawan Mal was the governor of Multan. Though a successful administrator he was inferior to Rup Lal in honesty.

Sikh Sardars. The Sikh sardars were usually employed in the army. Besides the sardars there was a knot of Sikh priests who were in attendance at the Court. Of these Bhai Ram Singh, Bhai Govind Singh and Bhai Gurmukh Singh were the chief. The first two were the grandsons of a celebrated saint of Lahore who was alive at the time of Ranjit Singh's occupation of the capital. The two Bhais were granted jagirs and assigned an honourable place in the Durbar. They, particularly Ram Singh, were the spiritual instructors of the Maharaja. They commanded great respect and influence. Bhai Gurmukh Singh

The Bhais

was the son of Sant Singh, guardian of the sacred temple at Amritsar. His influence was not equal to his rival, Bhai Ram Singh. "But in quickness of apprehension as well as in his address and manner, he is superior to the other two, but is deficient in their prudence and knowledge of the world." [Shahamat Ali, p. 31.]

Desa Singh and Lehna Singh Majithia.

The two sardars of the house of Majithia were Desa Singh and his son Lehna Singh. Desa Singh was well known in his time as a divisional commander in the army and as the governor of Amritsar. But his fame was eclipsed by that of his son. Lehna Singh was the only Sikh sardar who made a name in civil administration. Like his father he was in charge of the districts round Amritsar; and his administration was to a high degree just and benevolent. He was a man of sterling integrity. He was a mechanist, was fond of astronomy and mathematics and was master of several languages. Lepel Griffin writes: "Had a man of the reputation and administrative talent of Lehna Singh taken the lead in 1845 in the Punjab, the great troubles which came upon the country might have been averted. But he was no true patriot. He did not understand that the religion of a statesman, and indeed of every honest man, is to stand by his country in time of danger, sharing her griefs, and if need be, falling with her." But on the other hand when the troubles were brewing, Lehna avoided all political responsibility and, on the pretext of a pilgrimage, retired to Benares.

Hari Singh Nalwa.

Hari Singh Nalwa was the most conspicuous among a race of soldiers. He began life as a khidmatgar, but his dash and bravery secured rapid rise. He took part in all difficult expeditions, in the final capture of Multan and in the conquest of Kashmir. He was appointed governor of

Kashmir; and his rule (1819-20)* showed how poor and tyrannical he was as an administrator. He then held successively the governorship of Hazara and Peshawar. It was at the frontier that he found ample scope for the display of his undaunted bravery and religious fanaticism. His work at the frontier has already been explained (*vide* pp. 26-27). He was an intrepid soldier and a dashing general. His impetuous courage frequently placed him in critical situations and he at last fell a victim to his bravery. He was a deadly foe of the Afghans whom he held in great contempt.

The Sindhanwalias.

The Sindhanwalias were another group of brave soldiers, They belonged to the same branch of the Jat family as Ranjit Singh. Budh Singh entered the Sikh army; and his most notable service was against Syed Ahmed Shah (*vide* p. 23). He died in 1827. His two brothers Attar Singh and Lehna Singh, and Ajit Singh (nephew of the former) enjoyed the favour of the Maharaja. These three represented the opposition to the Jammu Rajas. All of them met with violent deaths in the troublous forties.

Sham Singh.

Sham Singh Attariwala was another Sikh general who took part in the Multan, Kashmir and frontier campaigns. He was the father-in-law of Kunwar Nao Nehal Singh. He was killed at Sobraon.

Mohammadan Officers. Of the Mohammadan Officers the best known were the three brothers Aziz-ul-Din, Nur-ul-Din and Imam-ul-Din. Fakir was the family title which their father, Ghulam Mohai-ud-Din, had assumed. That title is usually prefixed to the name of each of the three brothers.

Aziz-ul-Din was one of the most conspicuous figures at the Lahore Court. Soon after the occupation of Lahore, he was

* The dates are a little discrepant. I have followed Prinsep (*vide* pp. 125, 129).

Fakir Aziz-ul-Din.

appointed as personal physician to Ranjit Singh. But being a man of great ability and judgment the physician was ere long admitted to a participation in the affairs of state. He first came to prominence in 1808 when he advised the Maharaja to make up the differences with the English. The result was the Treaty of Amritsar. Thenceforward his advice was always sought in all matters connected with Europeans and the English Government. The Fakir remained the Foreign Minister of the Maharaja to the end of the reign, all the while enjoying the latter's fullest trust and confidence. On more than one occasion when the Maharaja went on distant expedition he was left for the protection of Lahore. It is believed that it was due to his wise counsels that friendship was maintainted with the English throughout the reign.

Aziz-ul-Din was occasionally employed on military service. But it was in diplomatic work that he displayed special aptitude. He was a member of the embassy which waited on Lord William Bentinck in 1831 ; he took an important part in the meeting with the same Governor-General at Rupar in 1831 and with Lord Auckland at Ferozepur in 1838. He was sent to Dost Muhammad in 1835 to carry on false negotiations about Peshawar (*vide* p. 25). It was a dangerous task that he was engaged in ; however, he proved himself equal to the emergency. He was usually placed in charge of the European visitors to Lahore ; and between them and the Maharaja, he was the intermediary for communication. His unaffected modesty, polished manners and elegant eloquence charmed the foreigners ; and all of them carried a pleasant impression of him. To foreign eyes he was the most prominent man in the Lahore Durbar.

He was simple and unostentatious in his habits. This combined with the fact that he was a liberal Sufi, disarmed all jealousy and made him popular in a Court where most of the

nobles were either Hindus or Sikhs. He was a learned man, being well versed in Persian and Arabic classics. He was a poet, a philosopher, a physician and a statesman.

Aziz-ul-Din died in December, 1845, just before the commencement of the Sikh War. In his last moment he protested in vain against the march of the Sikh army to the Sutlej.

Fakir Nur-ul-Din.

Nur-ul-Din entered Sikh service in 1810. He was successively employed in the civil administration at Gujrat, Jalandhar and Wazirabad. From 1818 he was at Lahore being placed in charge of the arsenal and garrison at the Lahore Fort and sharing the charge of the treasury with Beli Ram and Hukma Singh. For some time he was in charge of the Gulab-khana or dispensary. He was also employed on diplomatic service. After the Sikh war Nur-ul-Din was appointed a member of the Council of Regency. At Court he was known as Khalifa Sahib.

Fakir Imam-ul-Din.

Imam-ul-Din is known as the governor of Govindgarh which commanded the city of Amritsar. It was a position of trust and responsibility, for it was at that fort that the greatest part of the Maharaja's treasures were deposited. Like the other two brothers, he was employed by Ranjit Singh in his diplomatic intercourse with the British Government; as for instance, in 1827. In the several letters and despatches of Captain Wade, frequent references are made to the three Fakir brothers, to their tact, good sense and pleasing manners.

There was no other Muhammadan who equalled them in rank and wisdom; but mention may be made of Sarfaraz Khan and Zulfikar Khan, sons of Nawab Muzaffar Khan of Multan. In character they were the reverse of the Fakir brothers.

With great difficulty could they accommodate themselves as courtiers in the Durbar of their former foe ; and occasionally their pride and hauteur got the better of their interest and sagacity.

Europeans. One of the marked features of Ranjit Singh's reign was the large number of European adventurers who were taken into his service. According to one estimate the number ran up to seventy. Most of these are mere names. Four of them deserve to be mentioned alike for the ability they possessed and the service they rendered to the Maharaja. They were Generals Ventura, Allard, Court and Avitabile.

Ventura and Allard.

In March, 1822, Ventura and Allard presented themselves at Ranjit Singh's Durbar for employment. The former was an Italian by birth and the latter a Frenchman. Both had served under Napoleon Bonaparte on whose downfall they made their way to Persia. Presumably they did not like the subordinate place they were required to fill and were attracted by the name and fame and Ranjit Singh to seek their fortunes farther east. They travelled through Afghanistan to Lahore and applied to the Maharaja for service. Ranjit Singh was at first very suspicious of their motives ; and their application, which was in French, and in which their wishes and antecedents were stated, was forwarded to Ludhiana for translation. Then they were taken in.* Ventura was an infantry colonel in the French service and Allard had similar rank in the cavalry. They were both set to instruct troops in the European method of exercise and manœuvre, each in the branch of the army for which he had the requisite training and experience. They, naturally enough, became the objects of

* Three of the conditions of service were : growing the beard, abstention from beef-eating and from smoking. The last condition was relaxed.

jealousy on the part of the native commandants, first, because of the favour which the Maharaja showed to them, and secondly, because of the poor opinion they expressed of the existing state of drill and discipline in the army. The sardars for long regarded the European officers, at least the prominent ones, with jealousy, if not enmity. In course of time the adverse feeling wore off. The European officers justified by their action the confidence and respect placed in them.

Little is known about Ventura's early and previous life. He served under Napoleon in the armies of Spain and Italy. By Ranjit Singh he was ordered to reform the infantry ; and his salary was fixed at Rs. 2,500 besides the jagir he enjoyed in the name of his daughter. Ventura came in course of time to hold the command of the *Fouj-i-khas*, of which the details have already been given. His services on the frontier have already been mentioned (*vide* p. 24). Baron Charles Huegel* notes : "The general has been of great service to the Maharaja, both in the field and in the training of forces, but he is blamed for not being sufficiently pliant and refined for Court... He has been appointed kazi and governor of Lahore which gives him the third place at the Court." But troubles came after Ranjit Singh's death. After the death of Kharak Singh his house was sacked and he narrowly escaped assassination. His last work was the aid given to Hira Singh in revenging the murder of Dhyan Singh on Ajit Singh (1843). After this Ventura severed his connection with the Punjab. He went to France and died in 1858.

General Ventura and his work.

Jean Francois Allard was born in 1785 ; served in Italy from 1804 to 1806 ; and in Naples and Spain from 1807 to

* Huegel travelled in the Punjab in 1835-36. Ventura's house was near Anarkali's tomb. Both he and Allard resided in the mausoleum for some time. The British spies at Lahore, in their reports, referred to them as Ulur and Wuntoor.

General Allard's life.

1810. When employed, Allard was ordered to raise a corps of dragoons to be drilled and disciplined like the cavalry of Europe (p. 63) In 1834 he went to France and returned next year bringing with him a letter from Louis Philippe, King of France. He was long suspected by the British as the diplomatic agent of France at the Court of Lahore. He died in January, 1839, and was deeply regretted by the troops under his command with whom he was very popular. (Shahamat Ali, p. 67.)

General Court.

Court and Avitabile came to Lahore in 1827. Claude Auguste Court was born in 1793 and was in the French army from 1813 to 1818. He was in Sikh service from 1827 to 1841. He was given the work of improving the artillery in which he showed considerable ability. He was something of an antiquarian and collected many coins bearing Greek legends.

General Avitabile and frontier administration.

General Avitabile was a Neapolitan. He was also in the Napoleonic army. In the Punjab he was generally employed in administrative work; his first charge was the Rechna Doab, the country between the Ravi and the Chenab. He was sent to the frontier in 1834 and became the governor of Peshawar after Hari Singh Nalwa's death in 1837. Avitabile's two instruments for preserving tranquillity on the border were the gibbet and the sword. Stiffened corpses hanging from gallows were a common sight in the environs of the city of Peshawar. "But," wrote Shahamat Ali in 1839, "disgusting as these exhibitions are, it is to be feared that, without them, there would be safety neither for life nor for property. Indeed, the benefit of this terrible severity is already being felt................The monthly average number of murdered victims, though still numerous,